Richard Ettinghausen

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om Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World

E. J. BRILL - LEIDEN

This book deals with three test cases showing the impact of Classical themes, especially in their Byzantine forms, on the arts of Sasanian Iran and later, on those of the Islamic world. In Chapter One various dionysiac scenes in Sasanian art are surveyed. It becomes clear that the representations of the God of wine himself were rare and little changed from their Classical prototypes. However, secondary followers of the cult, such as the maenads, were more frequently used although probably with a changed meaning. The god's symbolic animal, a panther or another feline animal drinking wine from a vessel is found as late as the twelfth century A.D.

The adoption of the Pegasus motif is treated in the Second Chapter. In Sasanian times it soon lost its Classical mythological connotation and became a symbol of ascension of the semi-divine King of Kings. It then turned into a royal symbol and endured to the Muslim Middle Ages.

The final Chapter deals with what heretofore had been interpreted as the "disrobing chamber" of the bath establishment of Khirbat al-Mafjar, a complex princely palace near Jericho, built during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham (724-43). It is shown that this actually was the Throne and Audience Hall serving, in addition, for banquets and divertissements as a pool at one side indicates. Although the shape of the building and the various designs of the mosaics are Classical, the stucco wall decorations and symbolisms used throughout are Sasanian. This rich Persian royal décor is particularly valuable because nothing remains in Sasanian palaces,

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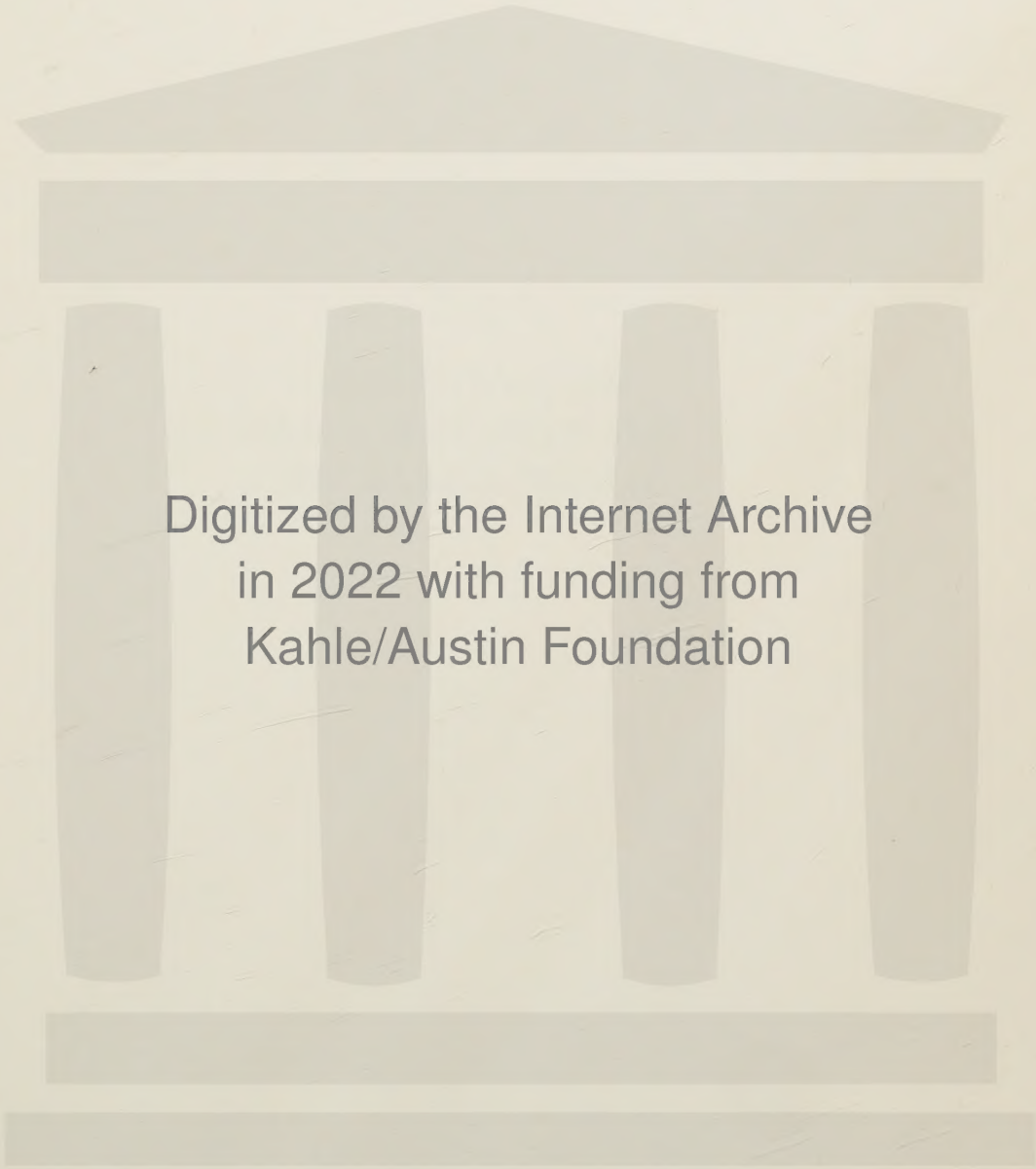
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VOLUME III

RICHARD ETTINGHAUSEN

FROM BYZANTIUM TO SASANIAN IRAN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

LEIDEN
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1972

FROM BYZANTIUM TO SASANIAN IRAN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

THREE MODES OF ARTISTIC INFLUENCE

BY

RICHARD ETTINGHAUSEN

With 21 Text Illustrations and 91 Figures on Plates

LEIDEN
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PREFACE

The main content of this publication was presented on May 1, 1970 at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. in the form of a lecture entitled "The Sasanian Encounter with Byzantine Art" and as such formed part of a symposium on "Byzantium and Sasanian Iran." In the course of preparing the text for publication when it was supplemented with references and footnotes, and slightly enlarged, the Islamic aspect became the more dominant. The paper seemed therefore less appropriate for publication in the *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* as its Editor had kindly suggested, since in this very specialized journal of Byzantine studies it would be hardly accessible to many scholars in the field of Islamic Art. In view of this situation the Editor of the *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* understandingly allowed the publication elsewhere, which makes the author doubly indebted to him. Thanks to the kind invitation of Professor Otto Kurz the author then gratefully accepted his suggestion to publish the paper in "The L. A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology." He kept, however, the original literary form of a lecture, as it seemed to be a more direct way of presentation as it concentrates in a compact, direct fashion on the main issues without being distracted by references to all possible parallels and lengthy discussions of various side issues. As in the original lecture it naturally still places the objects and monuments in the center of the discussion.

As this study deals with the interaction of three complex civilizations which our all-too-specialized academic world keeps in separate compartments, the author thought it wise, at times, to consult various colleagues in fields other than his own. They all gave him their opinions generously and he wishes therefore to express his appreciation for the advice given, although he alone must take responsibility for the presentation and interpretation of the given facts. He wishes to thank in particular Moshe Barasch, P. H. von Blanckenhagen, Otto Brendel, Hugo Buchthal, Slobodan Ćurčić, Martin Eisenberg, Ernst Kitzinger and Kurt Weitzmann. He is also greatly indebted to Richard Krautheimer and Günter Kopcke, his colleagues at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, for having kindly read those sections of the manuscript which had some bearing on their own field of study and having given him their opinion. He has also benefitted from a correspondence with R. W. Hamilton, "the last Lord of Khirbat al-Mafjar" and main author of the most thorough excavation report, who has also given him permission to publish the content of an important letter. Finally, he is grateful to a number of institutions and their directors who provided photographs, especially the authorities of the Department of Antiquities of Israel, the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, the Cleve-

land Museum of Art, the Museum of Islamic Art of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, and the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad.

INTRODUCTION

This study of the impact of Classical art—specifically that preserved by Byzantium—on Sasanian Iran and eventually on the Islamic world deals with one aspect of a two-sided issue of major historical proportions. That is to say, the reverse phenomenon (the Byzantine encounter with Iranian art and later with Islamic art) is not considered here. This is due not so much to space limitations; rather, it is because that aspect of the issue has already been investigated by a most competent scholar.[1]

The time period considered here also requires some comment since the problem is chronologically open-ended. Strictly speaking, Byzantine and Sasanian art coexisted for only a little more than three hundred years, from the founding of the new East Roman capital at Constantinople in A.D. 323 until the collapse of the Sasanian kingdom and the death of Yazdigird III in 651. However, Iran had received influences from Hellenistic and Roman art prior to this period—both under the Sasanian kings and preceding them during the Parthian and Seleucid eras, not to mention the impact of the Greeks on the Achaemenids; then, for centuries following this period Byzantine artistic concepts mingled with those of Sasanian inspiration, especially once the Umayyad caliphs had usurped not only the power of the Iranian rulers but their ceremonial trappings as well. Nevertheless, the artistic products of this exceedingly long period of cultural interchange—and therefore the particular questions asked here concerning their interpretation—come primarily from the relatively short period of actual political and therefore artistic confrontation between Sasanian Iran and Byzantium or from the century immediately following.

It is not our intention in this inquiry to survey *all* the Iranian monuments that betray Byzantine influence, nor is it to deal specifically with chronology, style, iconography in general, or artistic trends. Rather, we shall present, in three specific cases, three archetypes of artistic influence, or modes of acceptance, that appeared even while the two civilizations were hostile to each other for political, military and religious reasons, and that continued to be operative even after one of the two partners, Iran, had lost its independence, though not its cultural identity.

One form of reception—and the most limited one—was *transfer*, the taking over of shapes or concepts as they stand, without change or further development, possibly because reinterpretation proved impossible; such motifs are rather rare, are found only in isolated cases, and did not have an extended life. A more fundamental transformation was achieved

[1] André Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," in *L'Art de la Fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge*. Paris, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 265-290; *idem*, "Eléments sassanides et islamiques dans les enluminures des manuscrits espagnols du Haut Moyen Âge," *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 663-668.

by *adoption*. Just as a child may be adopted and brought up in a milieu entirely at variance with that of his original home so that his whole personality may thus be modified, though biologically he remains the same human being, so may artistic forms transferred from one region to another and remodeled according to novel principles differ so much from their original configurations that their true identities become obscured. The third and most far-reaching form of cultural reception involves the ready acceptance, owing to special conditions, of major artistic forms from another civilization and their creative combination with indigenous elements, in what might best be called a process of *integration*; being a form of artistic interchange, it is difficult to say which is the giver and which the receiver. Peculiar to this mode is the fact that such a felicitous co-equal intermingling could occur in an off-beat, marginal region. Still another of the concomitant results of this interaction was that it could lead to the selection of secondary or unusual features that suddenly took on a new significance in their new historical setting.

In our three chosen case histories, it seemed inadvisable simply to refer to the pertinent material, since this body of evidence is still too little known, and to a large extent even misunderstood at present. Therefore the reasons for our proposed identifications or reinterpretations had first to be given and only then could further deductions be made. An additional task was to establish the effectiveness of the impact of the Classical heritage on its neighbor. This formed the clue to our understanding of the productive afterlife of the visual imagery well beyond the heyday of its initial acceptance. This examination, in turn, will help us to gauge the dynamic quality of the original meeting of the two artistic traditions and the intercultural usefulness of certain motifs, be it in Iran or later in the Islamic world.[1]

[1] The author regrets that the very important publication *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei Anno CCCLXVIII, Roma, 1971, reached him too late to be referred to in this publication. This applies especially to the articles "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide dans le monde chrétien" (pp. 679-707) by André Grabar which should be added to the other publications by this author given in the footnote on page 1; "Art et religion sous les sassanides" by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (pp. 377-388); and, "Sources of Certain Female Representations in Sasanian Art" by Prudence Oliver Harper (pp. 503-515) which would have been considered in his "Chapter One".

CHAPTER ONE

DIONYSIAC MOTIFS

The first subject of inquiry, exemplifying the limited mode of transfer, is the reception of Dionysiac motifs in Sasanian art.[1] These motifs occur particularly, though not exclusively, on partially gilt silver bottles whose shape when found in Iran is typically and perhaps even exclusively Sasanian, although it is itself of Roman origin.[2] There is therefore no doubt that we are dealing with objects of Iranian origin dating from the period between the third and seventh centuries A.D.

The most informative piece of this group is a bottle of the typical shape in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington. One of its three relief figures shows the god himself, nude except for a cloak thrown over his shoulders and holding two identifying symbols, the *thyrsos* (or a staff derived from it) in his right hand and a panther on a leash seized by his left hand (Fig. 1). Any hesitation over this identification is dispelled by comparison with a Byzantine knife handle in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, attributed to the fourth century, on which Dionysos takes the same stance, has one of the attributes and is clothed in the same manner (Fig. 2). There is still an earlier parallel in a third-century Roman figure of Bacchus in the Walters Art Gallery (Fig. 3) pointing to the persistence of the iconographic tradition in time and space.

The same religious context can be claimed for the second figure on this bottle, a maiden holding in her left hand two stalks with buds or fruits. Her Dionysiac association is again made clear by the presence of a panther, whose leash is held by her right hand; this relationship is brought out even more specifically because the animal is seen drinking from a large jar, which is a motif symbolizing a Dionysiac revelry (Fig. 4).[3] The young woman is obviously a maenad, one of the female followers of the god. Again Western parallels can be established. From Byzantium there is the pseudo-Oppian manuscript, now in Venice, which has the same elements, though the maenad and the animal are here separated (Fig. 5).[4] This example is

[1] R. Ettinghausen, "A Persian Treasure," *Arts in Virginia*, vol. 8, Richmond, Fall-Winter, 1967-1968, pp. 29-41. On the basis of our very limited archaeological knowledge of Iran, the dates given here and elsewhere to Sasanian objects are to be regarded as only hypothetical.

[2] Harald von Petrikovits, "Die Herkunft einer sasanidischen Silberflaschenform," *Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete*, vol. 32, 1969, pp. 323-332, especially pl. 6, 1.

[3] Carl Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs*. Berlin, 1904, vol. 3, 2, pl. 70; Karl Lehmann-Hartleben and Erling C. Olsen, *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore*. Baltimore, 1942, pp. 12, 36, figs. 3 and 4; Friedrich Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage*. Berlin, 1968, vol. 1, pls. 34, 44; vol. 2, Beilage 29, pls. 100, 122; vol. 3, pls. 208, 217, 224.

[4] Kurt Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art*. Princeton, 1951, p. 138, pl. 43, fig. 157.

from the tenth or eleventh century and therefore much later than the Sasanian bottle, but it is obviously based on an earlier prototype.

The third figure is that of a youth leaning forward to receive a child (Fig. 6), which as a subject is perhaps not quite so obviously Dionysiac in character. The theme is nevertheless part of the same iconographic cycle as Roman art offers similar scenes of the initiation of children into the Bacchic mystery cult (Fig. 7).[1]

On other Sasanian bottles or plates we find scantily dressed women engaged in rapturous dancing, at times to the accompaniment of their own music (Figs. 8 and 9) which indicate other aspects of this imagery. But it is well to remember that this popularity of certain figural types does not extend to the god himself as the scenes with one to five figures are usually limited to his female companions.

The case is different with regard to two closely related Sasanian plates, one in the Historical Museum in Moscow, the other in the Freer Gallery of Art,[2] as they present a more complex iconographic theme: the triumph of Dionysos in the company of his followers (Fig. 10). In the shade of a richly laden grapevine, the god is seen seated on his chariot where he is joined by his consort Ariadne; his escort consists of two maenads, a satyr, and four putti. The exergue underlines the main theme by means of secondary figures. We find here two small musicians and a feline (leopard or panther) which is again greedily drinking from a large wine jar.

The triumphal scene is, of course, common in Roman and Byzantine art,[3] although as elsewhere in Sasanian art a basically narrative episode or an event in motion has been turned into a static, monumentalized spectacle. It suffices here to show as a parallel a Byzantine silver bowl tentatively attributed to Constantinople of the fifth or early sixth century, which is in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (Fig. 11).[4] It shows the same cortege in a more elaborate, freely moving version, with the two maenads dancing ahead of Dionysos, the smaller female figure seated with her back to him, a male follower behind the chariot, and the star-shaped wheel spokes all point to a common prototype. The general character of this model is suggested by a Roman cameo of the second century A.D. in the Naples Museum (Fig. 12). That Sasanian artists did not rely for such imagery on nearly contemporary Western pieces (or at least not

[1] Emily L. Wadsworth, "Stucco Reliefs of the First and Second Centuries still Extant in Rome," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. 4, 1924, pl. IX; Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*. Lund, 1957, pp. 106-115 ("The Child in the Bacchic Mysteries, Initiation of Children etc...."); Matz, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pl. 1 A; vol. 2 pl. 107.

[2] A. P. Smirnov, "Novaia nakhodka vostochnogo serebra v Priurale," *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo Muzeia*. Moskva, 1957; Ettinghausen, *op. cit.*, fig. 17.

[3] Lehmann-Hartleben and Olsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15, fig. 7; Matz, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pls. 69/71; vol. 2, Beilagen 30-41, 66-75, pls. 94, 96, 101-103, 106, 108, 110-112, 116, 121, 124-128, 134-138, 142-145, 152; vol. 3, pl. 239.

[4] Marvin C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, vol. 1, Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting*. Washington, 1962, pp. 5-7, pls. VI-VII.

exclusively) is demonstrated by a much earlier Iranian version of this scene in the British Museum, which is probably Parthian and has been dated to about A.D. 200 (Fig. 13).[1] This Iranian object, which is both pre-Sasanian and pre-Byzantine, is our first indication of the open-endedness of the problem to which we drew attention at the beginning of this investigation.

If further proof of early Iranian familiarity with Dionysiac imagery is still necessary, we need only mention the floor mosaics in a triple eyvan of the third-century palace of Bishapur, discovered by Roman Ghirshman (Figs. 14 and 15).[2] The masks and female figures were originally explained as "portraits of members of the royal family and the aristocracy" or as representations of "court ladies", but the horns and long donkey ears on one mask and the Pan's pipe, as well as the *pedum* (the curved staff favored by satyrs and other followers of Dionysos)[3] placed near two other masks leave little doubt that we are confronted with renderings in Iran of various aspects of the Dionysiac cult. Of special additional interest in this connection is the parallel between one of the maenads in this mosaic who is fully clothed and holds sprays of flowers (Fig. 14), and the second figure on the Freer bottle (Fig. 4) and the miniature in the pseudo-Oppian manuscript (Fig. 5).

All the bottles and plates so far discussed have in common that they are decorated with figural subjects whose Dionysiac origins and original meanings are clear. In addition there are other silver plates and vessels that are only partly decorated with figures such as dancers, musicians or drinkers, or with a primarily non-figural iconography (Figs. 16 and 17). In both types the grapevine often plays an essential part; besides this suggestive element and other similarities between these figured scenes and the Dionysiac milieu, it is, however, difficult to prove a specific connection. By the way, while these motifs are more frequently found on silver vessels, they also occur elsewhere. Thus the dancer and the musician are to be found among the sixth-century stucco reliefs of various sizes discovered in Ctesiphon (Figs. 18 and 19).[4]

To this more problematic group belongs a clearly recognizable series of vessels, most of them bottles or ewers and thus connected with drinking events, whose decoration consists of scantily clothed female figures always shown in motion. The stress is on the sexual aspects of their bodies, their coiffures crowned with hair knots, their rich jewelry, and the wide range

[1] O. M. Dalton, *The Treasure of the Oxus with other Examples of Early Oriental Metal-work*. Third ed. London, 1964, pp. 49-51, pl. XXVII. This is the first and basic analysis of the theme in Iran.

[2] R. Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*. vol. 2. *Les Mosaïques sassanides*. Paris, 1956, pp. 37-77, 111-141, frontispiece, pls. A, B, V-XIV; *idem*, *Iran. Parthians and Sasanians*. London, 1962, pp. 140-146, figs. 180-186.

[3] Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, pls. A, IX, 1 XIIII, 3, 4; *idem*, *Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 185.

[4] J. Heinrich Schmidt, "Figürliche sasanidische Stuckdekorationen aus Ktesiphon," *Ars Islamica*, vol. 4, 1937, pp. 175-177, figs. 1, 4 and 8 where the connection with the maenads has already been pointed out. See also K. Brisch, J. Kröger, F. Spuhler und J. Zick-Nissen, *Katalog 1971, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kunstbesitz*. Berlin-Dahlem, 1971, p. 40, No. 105 (with full bibliographic references).

of vegetal or other offerings that they hold in both hands (Figs. 20-22).[1] Certain aspects connect them with Dionysiac concepts. Thus their offerings include branches with vine leaves and grapes; the figures sometimes hold small children and what is particularly significant, in some cases they pour liquid from vessels into the mouths of diminutive felines (Fig. 22), thus echoing a motif which occurs in representations of the god himself. Particularly enlightening with regard to the last mentioned feature are the relief figures on an ivory medicine box of the second half of the fourth to fifth century A.D. in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection which for iconographic reasons should be attributed to Egypt (Fig. 23). Standing between a maenad (or, possibly, Ariadne) and a satyr we find the figure of Dionysos who holds in his left hand a thyrsos and in his right a small mixing bowl towards which a small panther is raising his head to catch the drops of wine. The manner in which the vessel is held in an outstretched arm and the eager attitude of the diminutive animal are the same in the ivory box and in the Sasanian vessels where this motif occurs. On the other hand, the strong stress on the agricultural character of their proffered offerings and possibly also the frequent presence of pigeon-like birds and other animals may indicate a specific connection with more general Iranian fertility beliefs. In any case, the inclusion of small children and the pouring of wine to felines seem to exclude an interpretation of a purely secular meaning. What we should expect and what has apparently happened is that one limited group of Dionysiac figures—the maenads—has been reinterpreted in Iran and elaborated visually beyond its initial significance. It is quite likely that the maenads have been transformed into figures of a fertility cult, possibly priestesses or devotees connected with the main Iranian goddess, Anahita. Thus while the iconographic and conceptual connections with an iconographic Dionysiac type are clear, the ultimate meaning of the images remains hypothetical and problematic. On the other hand, the iconography of the basic Dionysiac group is remarkably pure and unadulterated, as is demonstrated particularly by the Parthian and Sasanian renderings of the god himself, especially in the triumphal scenes. It is this unchanging acceptance by the Iranian artists of a very specific Western vocabulary that has induced us to label this process a mere *transfer*.

[1] Y. I. Smirnov, *Argenterie orientale*. St. Petersburg, 1909, No. 79; J. Orbeli and C. Trever, *Orfèvrerie sasanide*. Moscou-Leningrad, 1935, pls. 44-47; Yedda Godard," Bouteille d'argent sasanide," *Athār-é Īrān*, vol. 3, 1938, pp. 291-300; R. Ghirshman, "Notes iraniennes V. Scènes de banquet sur l'argenterie sassanide," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 16, 1953, pp. 51-76; *idem*, "Argenterie d'un seigneur sassanide," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 2, 1957, pp. 77-82; *idem*, *Parthians and Sasanians*, figs. 256-258; Dorothy E. Miner, "A Newly Acquired Sasanian Vase," *Archaeology*, vol. 17, 1964, p. 61; Dorothy G. Shepherd, "Sasanian Art in Cleveland," *Bulletin of the Clevelend Museum of Art*, vol. 51, 1964, pp. 83-88; Oleg Grabar, *Sasanian Silver. Late Antique and Early Mediaeval Arts of Luxury from Iran*. Ann Arbor, 1967, pp. 60-67; Camilla Trever, "À propos des temples de la déesse Anahita en Iran sassanide," *Iranica Antiqua*, vol. 7, 1967, pp. 121-134; Ettinghausen, "A Persian Treasure," pp. 29-41, O. Grabar, "Sasanian and Islamic Art Through the Ages (in the Cincinnati Art Museum)," *Apollo*, vol. 93, 1971, p. 260, pl. II.

The dionysiac connections of this group have been first stressed by J. H. Schmidt, Mme. Godard and Miss Shepherd.

Three questions must, however, still be answered if we are to understand the historical significance of this artistic encounter. What elevates it above the mere accidental? How was it that Iran accepted this foreign imagery associated with the god of wine in the first place? How can we explain the introduction of these Western motifs into Iran? And finally, was there some recognizable aftereffect of this particular meeting of two civilizations?

The Parthian plate showing the triumph of Dionysos indicates that the original impact occurred in that period of Iranian history when the entire country, but especially the court, was under the strong influence of Greek ideas. On Parthian coins not only are there Greek inscriptions, but at least ten kings have also labeled themselves *Philhellene*. They are Mithridates I, Artabanus I, Mithridates II, Artabanus II, Phraates III, Mithridates III, Orodes II, Phraates IV, Phraataces and Gotarzes.[1] We also have to recall Plutarch's remark that "when Alexander was civilizing Asia, Homer was commonly read and the children of the Persians, of the Susianians, and of the Gedrosians became acquainted with the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides."[2] The same author gives us further evidence of this Hellenizing process in his *Life of Crassus* (XXXIII), in which he describes a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* at the court of the Parthian King Orodes III (57-38 B.C.) in which the actor playing the role of Agave appeared on the stage with the actual head of Crassus.[3] Furthermore, there was in Iran a definite predilection for wine, so that the Western concepts connected with Dionysos must have seemed quite acceptable. For instance, Herodotus says of the Iranians during the Achaemenian period:

> It is their custom to deliberate about the gravest matters when they are drunk; and what they approve in their counsels is proposed to them the next day . . . when they are now sober; and if being sober they still approve it, they act thereon, but if not, they cast it aside. And when they have taken counsel about the matter when sober, they decide upon it when they are drunk.[4]

This custom continued in the Sasanian period when, according to al-Jahiz, King Bahram Gur ordered his chamberlain to receive from the people petitions and to present them to him when he was drunk.[5] Finally, the national epic of the Iranians, the *Shah-nameh*, the stories of which end with the Sasanian period, also describes widely held drinking customs.[6]

[1] E. T. Newell, "The Coinage of the Parthians," *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope. London-New York, 1938-1939, vol. 1, pp. 477-490. W. Wroth, *British Museum Catalogue, Parthia*. London, 1903.

[2] *Plutarch's Moralia*, ed. et tr. Frank Cole Babbitt *(The Loeb Classical Library)*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1957, vol. 4, pp. 394-395 (328 D).

[3] *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. et tr. Bernadotte Perrin *(The Loeb Classical Library)*, London-New York, 1916, vol. III, pp. 420-421. The significance of these passages were brought out by Kurt Weitzmann in his "Three 'Bactrian' Silver Vessels," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 25, 1943, pp. 323-324.

[4] Herodotus, ed. et tr. A. D. Godley *(The Loeb Classical Library)*. London-New York, 1920, vol. 1, pp. 172-175, quoted in E. Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine-drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 13, 1960, p. 45.

[5] Al-Jahiz, *Kitab al-Taj*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha, Cairo, 1914, pp. 29-30; see Yarshater, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[6] Yarshater, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

We can only speculate on how Dionysiac motifs may have been introduced, though we have both literary evidence and monuments to support our conjectures. It is known that Shapur I, after his victory over Valerian, installed 10,000 Roman prisoners in Bishapur, Shushtar, and Gundeshapur, and that among them were engineers, architects, masons, and other craftsmen.[1] It is not too difficult to imagine that having twice conquered Antioch, with its splendid floor mosaics, Shapur desired such decorations in his own palace. Happily these mosaics have been partially preserved and their theme is precisely of Dionysiac character (Figs. 14 and 15), as would have been appropriate for a banquet hall.

Other sources of evidence are actual Roman objects with Dionysiac decoration that are said to have been found in Iran. The most important example is a silver handle from a dish of the second century A.D. in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This handle, which shows the Indian triumph of Dionysos, is also remarkable for having been executed in a relief technique akin to that used by Parthian and Sasanian silversmiths (Fig. 24).[2] The probability of such an import into Iran is corroborated by one other Roman piece with a Dionysiac theme, a small silver statuette reminiscent of the bronze Bacchus in the Walters Art Gallery (Fig. 3), although its raised hand has lost the thyrsos that it originally held (Fig. 25). It appeared in New York among the holdings found in Iran of a Persian importer of curios and antiquities and is now in a private American collection.[3]

Other Western motifs have been discovered in recent years either on imported pieces or in native paraphrases. The most important of these two groups shows the figure of Heracles, who appears in every conceivable shape and medium, from monumental rock reliefs to small statuettes discovered in the vast region stretching between Iraq and Afghanistan.[4] Although a further investigation of this motif would lead us too far afield here, we can at least surmise that the popularity of this image may be explainable by the probable identification of Heracles with a national god or heroic figure;[5] it should also be recalled that in Iran Heracles at times took on a Dionysiac aspect.[6]

A more isolated manifestation of foreign influence is represented by an imported bronze,

[1] Ghirshman, *Bîchâpour*, p. 25; for sources see: Mas'udi, *Les Prairies d'or*, tr. C. Barbier de Maynard et P. de Courteille. Paris, 1914, vol. 2, pp. 185f; *Chronique de Séert*, ed. et tr. Addai Scher in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 4, pp. 220-223, see J. Gagé, *La Montée des Sassanides et l'heure de Palmyre*. Paris, 1964, pp. 315-316.

[2] Christine Alexander, "A Roman Silver Relief. The Indian Triumph of Dionysos," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, new series, vol. 14, 1955-1956, pp. 64-67.

[3] See also the Hellenistic bronzehead of Dionysos found in Hatra ("The Treasures of Mesopotamia: Baghdad's New Museum," *The Illustrated London News* Dec. 3rd, 1966, p. 30).

[4] W. van Ingen, *Figurines from Seleucia on the Tigris*. Ann Arbor, 1939, pp. 106-109, pl. XVIII; Weitzmann, "Three 'Bactrian' Silver Vessels," pp. 322-323; Klaus Fischer, "Ein Śiva-Buddha-Herakles Stein von Saozma Kala," *Archäologischer Anzeiger. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, vol. 72, 1957, cols. 415-436; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 79; Tania Ghirshman, *Archéologue malgré moi*. Neuchâtel-Paris, 1970, fig. A opposite p. 400.

[5] Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Mentor Book). New York, 1966, pp. 183 and 225, figs. 69-71, 87; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, p. 29.

[6] Frye, *op. cit.*, figs. 69-70.

now in the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, of Poseidon reclining on a chariot on which he is accompanied by other nautical figures (Fig. 26).[1] What makes this singular find, which is said to be from the Island of Kharg in the Persian Gulf, significant in this context is the similarity of its iconographic setting to the triumphal ride of Dionysos (Figs. 10, 11, and 13). Finally, it is important to note that the largest group of adopted Classical motifs, those found on some forty ivory rhyta from the first Parthian capital of Nyssa, included Dionysiac themes.[2] The appearance of the classical god of wine on Sasanian silver bottles and plates is, therefore, just one phenomenon in a broader artistic context.

As the figure of the youthful male god Dionysos apparently had no equivalent in Iranian myths, he did not experience a transfiguration that would have provided him with a new lease on life in Iranian guise. Only secondary figures around the god could be evolved further as we noted in the case of the maenads. Yet despite the usual Muslim eagerness to employ Iranian motifs the image of a scantily dressed female figure could not have lasted long in the Islamic period. Still, the theme of the fully clothed female dancers as depicted in the Jawsaq Palace of Samarra and in subsequent periods must be thought to derive from the Sasanian transformations of Dionysiac models. On the other hand, although drinking scenes abound in Islamic art, especially in Iranian courtly art, just as they do in Persian literature, our present knowledge of the material indicates that this motif does not seem to have had a specific prototype in the Sasanian period or was at least not a major artistic theme.

Curiously enough, there was, however, a minor element of the Dionysiac iconography which was readily adopted and used long after its significance was forgotten. It was though, to be deployed in a disjointed fashion: the motif of the panther (or other feline) drinking from a jar (Figs. 4, 10 and 13). In Roman and Byzantine art the various attitudes of the drinking animal were rendered realistically (Fig. 5).[3] Animal handles were used in the Achaemenian period; but in the art of this period the animal head does not usually touch the vessel itself and at times it even looks away from it.[4] In the Parthian period, too, the feline animal serves merely as handle (Fig. 27) without it being concerned with the content of the vessel. However, in the new Sasanian iconographic associations, the feline is closely attached to jars and ewers and is placed close to the lip of the vessel as if he were eager to reach its precious liquid (Fig. 28)—a pose which is prefigured by Roman handles of the first

[1] David T. Owsley, "Two New Ancient Bronzes," *Carnegie Magazine*, vol. 45, 1971, p. 62. The identification of the main figure as Poseidon was made by Professor Kopcke.

[2] M. E. Masson and G. A. Pugachenkova, *Parthianskiye Ritony Nissy*. Album of 120 plates with text in Russian, Turcoman, French and Tajik. Moscow, 1956; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, p. 31, fig. 41.

[3] See p. 3 footnote 3. After this paper had been finished we noted that this subject has been briefly treated in Prudence Harper, Andrew Oliver, Jr., Nora Scott and Christine Lilyquist, "Origin and Influence, Cultural Contacts: Egypt, the Ancient Near East, and the Classical World," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 29, 1971, p. 325.

[4] R. Ghirshman, *The Arts of Ancient Iran from its Origins to the Time of Alexander the Great*. New York, 1964, figs. 104, 222, 307, 308 and 333.

to second centuries (Fig. 29).[1] This arrangement was soon formalized in Iran especially in the post-Sasanian period and the body of the panther became stylized and elongated (Fig. 30.) Even after its meaning had been long forgotten this pose continued in Seljuq times (Fig. 31), although it may be that some of these feline handles have become detached from their original ewers through burial and have now been joined to other vessels. We also find metal or pottery jugs on which the felines appear only as small figures on the tops of the handles as unlikely thumb rests; sometimes they are placed even more incongruously at the bottom of the handles (Figs. 32 and 33); or only a tiny vestigial head may be stuck atop a handle (Fig. 34). Still other examples, especially big-mouthed pottery jugs of the later twelfth and early thirteenth century, use two feline handles, probably for reasons of symmetry (Fig. 35). In another stage of development the animal leaves its usual connection with the handle and is joined to the neck of a vessel (Fig. 36). Or, the feline becomes attached to the handle of other types of vessels, which had nothing to do with the drinking or mixing of beverages, for instance on a kettle used for pouring water in the bathhouse (Fig. 37). Apparently the basic association between vessel and feline was so strong that it persisted in rudimentary or variant forms even though the original iconographic idea and its appropriate rendering had long ago passed into oblivion.

In reviewing the material discussed so far, we are at first struck by the abundance of Dionysiac scenes in Iran. The basic images of the god himself, with thyrsos and panther or in triumphal procession are, however, few and at best only copies of Classical motifs. We have here an example of a mere transfer of scenes without further translation into Iranian idiom. The underlying concepts were too complex and alien to be adopted. Only the secondary, more universally understandable themes of female musicians and dancers lent themselves to various degrees of transformations in Iran. It also seems significant that the image that could most readily be abstracted and divested of its Dionysiac connotations—the panther at the wine jar—is still to be found in the twelfth and thirteenth century art of that country, and even then in connection with vessels which had a more ordinary, middleclass function without pretensions to a noble Sasanian pedigree.

[1] See now also Umberto Scerrato, "Brocca bronzea iranica con ansa zoomorfa in una collezione privata a Roma," *Arte Orientale in Italia*, vol. 1, Roma 1971, pp. 61-75, especially fig. 3.

CHAPTER TWO

PEGASUS

Our second archetypal piece is a partially-gilt Sasanian silver plate, which was made in Iran in the fourth or early fifth century and is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Fig. 38). Since its first thorough and well-documented publication the piece has become known as the "Plate of the Heavenly Twins."[1] The two nude youths are standing before their horses, which are drinking from a well (actually a jar with the personification of the well) and have been identified, quite understandably, as the main figures in the scene, which was believed to have been modeled after a representation of the Dioscuroi, Castor and Pollux. The Greco-Roman character of the pair, apparently divine beings, and their imposing size seem to justify such an interpretation, yet there are also points that give us pause for further thought. The horses are winged, which the mounts of the Dioscuroi were not (Fig. 39). If we are to accept the early interpretation we then must assume that this feature has been added to underscore the divine nature of the main figures. There is also the small musician seated between the wings of the horses. As he has no specific association with the Dioscuroi, the little lute player was thus thought to have been included as a mere space filler.

As it happens, a second Sasanian silver plate that repeats the general composition of the Metropolitan piece has come to light (Fig. 40). However, while the horses are still shown as if they were about to drink and are again winged the two youths and the figure in the well have been omitted. The equine element thus seems to represent the basic motif. In this respect it is important to remember that there are quite a number of Sasanian representations of single winged horses on textiles (Fig. 41), seals (Fig. 42), glass and metal; more rarely pairs of such animals occur (Fig. 43). This suggests that from an Iranian point of view the horses, not the youths, are the main figures, and secondly, that we are apparently dealing with a single winged animal which has been duplicated in the form of an affronted pair according to a common Oriental practice, found in many Sasanian representations, especially on stuccoes or in metal work (Figs. 43 and 44).

These considerations suggest that before we deal with the horse motif as such we have to consider the initial, more complex scene on the plate of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Here it seems most likely the Sasanian artist copied a Greco-Roman motif of a single nude youth with a winged horse at a well, which he then reproduced a second time in reverse. The problem is to establish the existence of such a Greco-Roman subject.

[1] Prudence Oliver Harper, "The Heavenly Twins," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, new series, vol. 23, 1965, pp. 186-195; Oleg Grabar, *Sasanian Silver*, p. 66, fig. 25.

Happily, the theoretically reconstructed theme exists in the scene of Bellerophon with Pegasus at the spring Peirene. The event is described in two versions. Strabo renders it as follows:

> The summit of Acrocorinthus has a small temple of Aphrodite, and below the summit is the Spring Peirene... and here, they say, Pegasus, a winged horse which sprang from the neck of Gorgon Medusa, when her head was cut off, was caught drinking by Bellerophon.[1]

Even more pertinent is the passage in Pindar's *Olympian Ode XIII*, because it explains not only the scene as such, but also an important though inconspicuous detail, the reins of the harnessed horse held by Bellerophon:

> He was eager to bind beside the spring Pegasus... until at last the virgin Pallas brought a bridle with a golden band and the dream became a vision of broad daylight and she "said: Sleepest thou, son of Aeolus. Come! take this to charm thy steed...[2]"

The episode has been rendered twice by Byzantine ivory carvers. The better executed one is on the so-called Veroli Casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum, dating from the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century (Fig. 45).[3] There the general configuration of the youth in three-quarter view and of his winged horse is very close to the Sasanian version in the Metropolitan Museum; in both instances the heroes hold the reins in their hands and they are armed with spears although in the Iranian version these are rather awkwardly placed. In the Byzantine carving the personification of the spring by the nymph Peirene has, however, been merged with the image of another goddess whose ambiguous identity is still being discussed by scholars.[4] The second, coarser Byzantine version of the scene, for some time in Vienna but now again in the Church of Pirano (Fig. 46)[5] presents both a large jar and "waves", so all possible forms of iconographic rendition of a spring—water, vessel and female figure—exist in one version or another. We can from this assume that a thematically closely related

[1] *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. et tr. Horace Leonard Jones *(The Loeb Classical Library)*. London, 1927, pp. 192-195.

[2] *Olympian Odes*, XIII, 64-67. *The Odes of Pindar*, ed. and tr. Sir John Sandys *(The Loeb Classical Library)*. London-New York, 1915, pp. 138-139.

[3] Adolph Goldschmidt und Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin, 1930, vol. 1, p. 30, No. 21, pl. IXb; John Beckwith, *The Veroli Casket*. London, 1962, p. 14, pl. 8. Beckwith illustrates also as his figure 14 the well-known Roman relief in the Palazzo Spada in Rome; however, it shows Bellerophon in profile, in front of the drinking horse.

[4] Goldschmidt and Weitzmann speak of Selene, Beckwith thinks of Demeter, Persephone or Hecate, while Erika Simon assumes it to be Stheneboia ("Nonnos und das Elfenbeinkästchen aus Veroli," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, vol. 79, 1964, p. 326).

[5] Goldschmidt-Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35, No. 28, pl. XV d. See also H. Graeven, "Ein Reliquienkästchen aus Pirano," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, Vol. 20, 1899, p. 17, pl. III, 3. Graeven pointed out already that the two ivories, in London and Pirano, probably go back to silver prototypes.

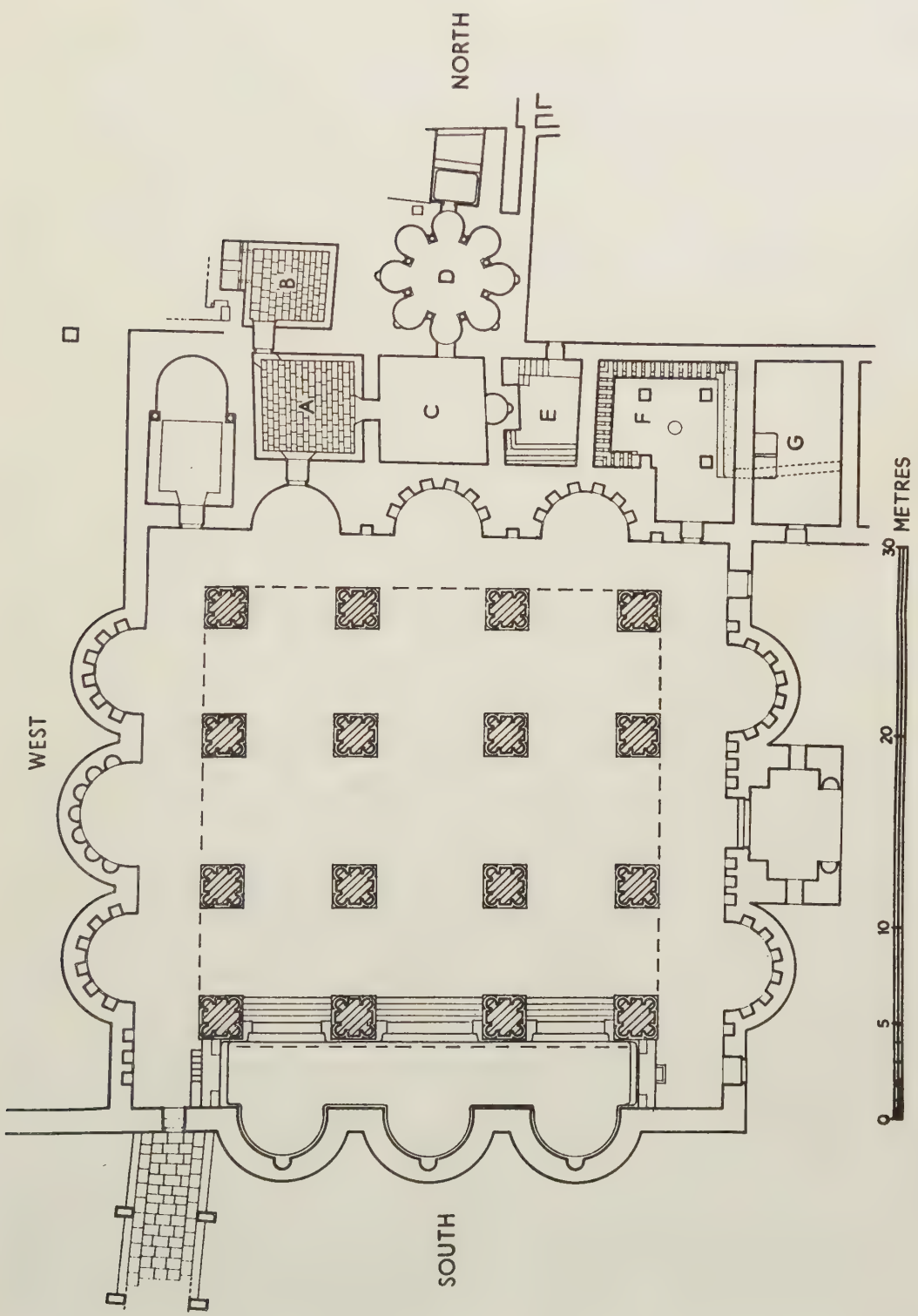

Fig. A. Khirbat al-Mafjar, Plan of the "Bath Hall" (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett, slightly modified to indicate the core building resting on 16 pillars outlined by a broken line, and the surrounding lower ambulatory).

earlier model, either of ivory or, more likely, of silver, served as a prototype for the Iranian artist.

Be that as it may, the scenes represent—as already explained by Graeven—in the case of the Veroli Casket, the final act of the capture of Pegasus. After Bellerophon had unsuccessfully tried to catch Pegasus browsing at the Spring Peirene, Athena appeared to him in his dream and to help him presented him with golden reins. He then applied these to the horse which is now subdued and can, for the first time, be led to the spring to be watered. Not knowing the myth, the Iranian artist did not gild the reins, yet, on the whole, the subject is reproduced well and expertly executed. Even the personification of the Spring, expressing surprise about Bellerophon's feat is rendered (as it is, in principle, on the Veroli Casket), and it is from the direction of her gaze (as well as from that of the musician) that we can conclude that the youth and horse on the right are the original ones, and those on the left their doubles.

What then was the nature of the basic motif in Sasanian art, and why was the borrowed Western design changed? It may very well be that the winged horse had several specific connotations in Sasanian times. At least two are clearly apparent. First, such horses occur as the mounts of royal hunters on Byzantine, Islamic and even Japanese silks done in the Iranian manner, which must therefore have followed now lost Sasanian prototypes (Figs.47 and 48).[1] Even in the abstracted, reduced image of a horse on a textile such connotations could be clearly suggested by the crescent and orb of the Sasanian crown and the fluttering ribbons tied to the animal's neck and legs, all of which designate it as the mount of the king (Fig. 41) just as they do on so many Sasanian silver plates. As the protomas of such animals as well as winged griffins and eagles in other pieces are also found as legs of thrones (Figs. 49 and 50), the motif must have also implied ascension and apotheosis. While this second connotation is indirectly suggested by its connection with the royal seat, there are also iconographic representations which actually reproduce such scenes. One such rendering predates the Sasanian period: the figure of Bellerophon riding heavenward on Pegasus occurs on a bowl regarded as a prime example of Bactrian art (Fig. 51).[2] The second example is a Sasanian seal in Berlin, on which the chariot of a solar god, probably Mithras, is pulled by two winged horses; here the scene has the specific connotation of a divine ascension (Fig. 52).

There are three probable reasons why the splendid Byzantine design was rejected. An Iranian would apparently have assumed that the youths holding the horses' reins on the Metropolitan plate were grooms. Such attendants were appropriate companions for royal horses, and for this reason they do occur, though rarely, on complex Sasanian rock reliefs (Fig. 53). In later Iranian representations of the royal court, they become fixed elements in the repertory.[3]

[1] Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*. Berlin, 1913, vol. 1, figs. 105, 107; Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 445.

[2] Weitzmann, "Three 'Bactrian' Silver Vessels," pp. 313-314, fig. 20, where it is suggested that the flight into heaven represents a scene from the drama *Bellerophon* by Euripides.

[3] For Sasanian representations of the time of

A groom was, however, a person of low rank and he could therefore be dispensed with in less narrative and more symbolic renderings. Furthermore, nude male figures had no aesthetic appeal in Iran, nor were they acceptable from the point of view of courtly protocol. As already noted in the case of the lightly clad Dionysos on the Freer bottle (Fig. 1), such designs were not often copied, nor were male nudes employed in specifically Iranian settings. Finally, there may also have been a moral consideration, for although Ammianus Marcellinus states that "most of the Persians are extravagantly given to venery and are hardly contented with a multitude of concubines," he nevertheless adds that "they are free from immoral relations with boys."[1]

There remains only the puzzling figure of the little lute player between the horses, which was given no specific meaning in the original interpretation of the two youths as the "Heavenly Twins." It should be recalled, however, that the association of the winged horse was with scenes of courtly art. Although no extensive royal banquet scenes of the Sasanian period have been preserved, the few that survive from post-Sasanian centuries and the many that we know from the Seljuq period imply that musicians were common in such settings. We may therefore surmise that the whole conceptual range of the royal setting suggested this additional iconographic element to the artist.

In summary then, we can affirm that, in contrast to the representations of Dionysos and of his rites (the ride on a chariot with Ariadne or his thiasos), none of which was ever adapted to Iranian concepts, the Classical image of Pegasus was not only introduced but also transformed to a specifically Iranian motif. This transformation is all the more remarkable because the theme of the winged horse was apparently very little known in pre-Hellenistic Iran.[2] Yet in earlier Iranian arts winged lions, bulls and ibexes as well as sphinxes, griffins, and other winged monsters frequently appeared.

We are fortunate in being able to trace the whole development of the winged horse, ranging from the archetypal Roman or Byzantine image of Bellerophon with Pegasus at the spring of Peirene, through the heraldic duplication of the scene according to Assyrian and Sasanian artistic principles, to purely Persian depictions of royal mounts and vehicles of ascension, and finally to mere decorative emblems, probably of an auspicious character (Fig. 54). Although the winged horse changed visually very little in this cultural transfer, its settings and accoutrements, even the media in which it was represented, are now different, indicating new interpretations or attitudes toward the design. In the end this foreign image was adopted as a fully naturalized and neutralized Iranian motif, and it proved strong enough

Shapur I (at Bishapur) and Shapur II (at Bishapur) and later Islamic examples see Grace D. Guest and Richard Ettinghausen, "The Iconography of a Kashan Luster Plate," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 4, 1961, pp. 32-43 ("The Waiting Groom with his Master's Horse") figs. B, 1, 8, 9, 12, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29, 30, 34-40.

[1] Ammianus Marcellinus, ed. et tr. John C. Rolfe *(The Loeb Classical Library)*. London-Cambridge, Mass. 1937, vol. 2, pp. 390-393.

[2] For a rare example of a winged horse see Ghirshman, *The Arts of Ancient Iran...*, fig. 333.

to survive into the medieval Muslim world, where it appeared as an abstract form with royal connotations (Fig. 55) or in settings with possible mythological overtones (Fig. 56). Of these two, the former was the more potent, owing to its more detached and conceptual presentation, and it thus in turn influenced the art of the West (Fig. 57).

CHAPTER THREE

THE THRONE AND BANQUET HALL OF KHIRBAT AL-MAFJAR

The third type of cultural interaction, that of integration, presupposes, as we have noted, a more profound and more far reaching process, one in which the components of the cultures involved are more evenly matched. The monument with which we shall demonstrate this dynamic type of encounter is the so-called "Bath Hall" of Khirbat al-Mafjar within a large complex near Jericho (Fig. A). It was built in the period of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham (724-743) as the first unit of a spacious compound that also included a large two-story palace, a fair-sized mosque, and a forecourt with a pavilion in a pool (Fig. B).[1]

Two basic facts about this structure should be clarified at the outset. The first is the historical situation in which it was built. In this period the new Arab overlords could readily combine artistic features of both Classical and Iranian origins. Through conquest they had gained complete control over Byzantine Palestine and Syria, and through annihilation of the independent Sasanian dynasty they had fallen heir to all of Iran and its cultural traditions. Although there had been artistic interplay even during the time when Byzantium and Sasanian Iran were opposing each other, the process could proceed at a much accelerated pace when both civilizations were brought together under the same ruler who in view of this novel situation "employed workmen from all quarters" (Severus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ). The second consideration is the purpose of this building, and it is at this point that current conceptions have obscured proper interpretation. It is therefore necessary to establish first the ideas that motivated the lord of this elaborate structure when he had it built. Happily, its forms and decoration are specific enough to provide the basic clues.

According to the current explanation, the large hall with its stately porch, sixteen massive pillars, eleven exedrae and an elaborate decorative scheme involving no fewer than thirty-eight different mosaic carpets, rich stucco and stone work, and wall paintings, was a "frigidarium combined with vestiary and reception room" or "frigidarium-apodyterium."[2] It has thus been thought to have formed an essential part of the specific bath establishment attached

[1] The basic publication is R. W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar. An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley*. With a contribution by Oleg Grabar. Oxford, 1959. Other general presentations are Oleg Grabar, "The Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar," *Archaeology*, vol. 8, 1955, pp. 228-235; D. C. Baramki, *Guide to the Umayyad Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar*. Amman, 1956; K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture. Umayyads. A.D. 622-750*. Second edition. Oxford, 1969, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 561-576 (with complete bibliography). A later, more specific publication is R. W. Hamilton, "Who built Khirbat al Mafjar?" *Levant*, vol. 1, 1969, pp. 61-67.

[2] Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, p. 47.

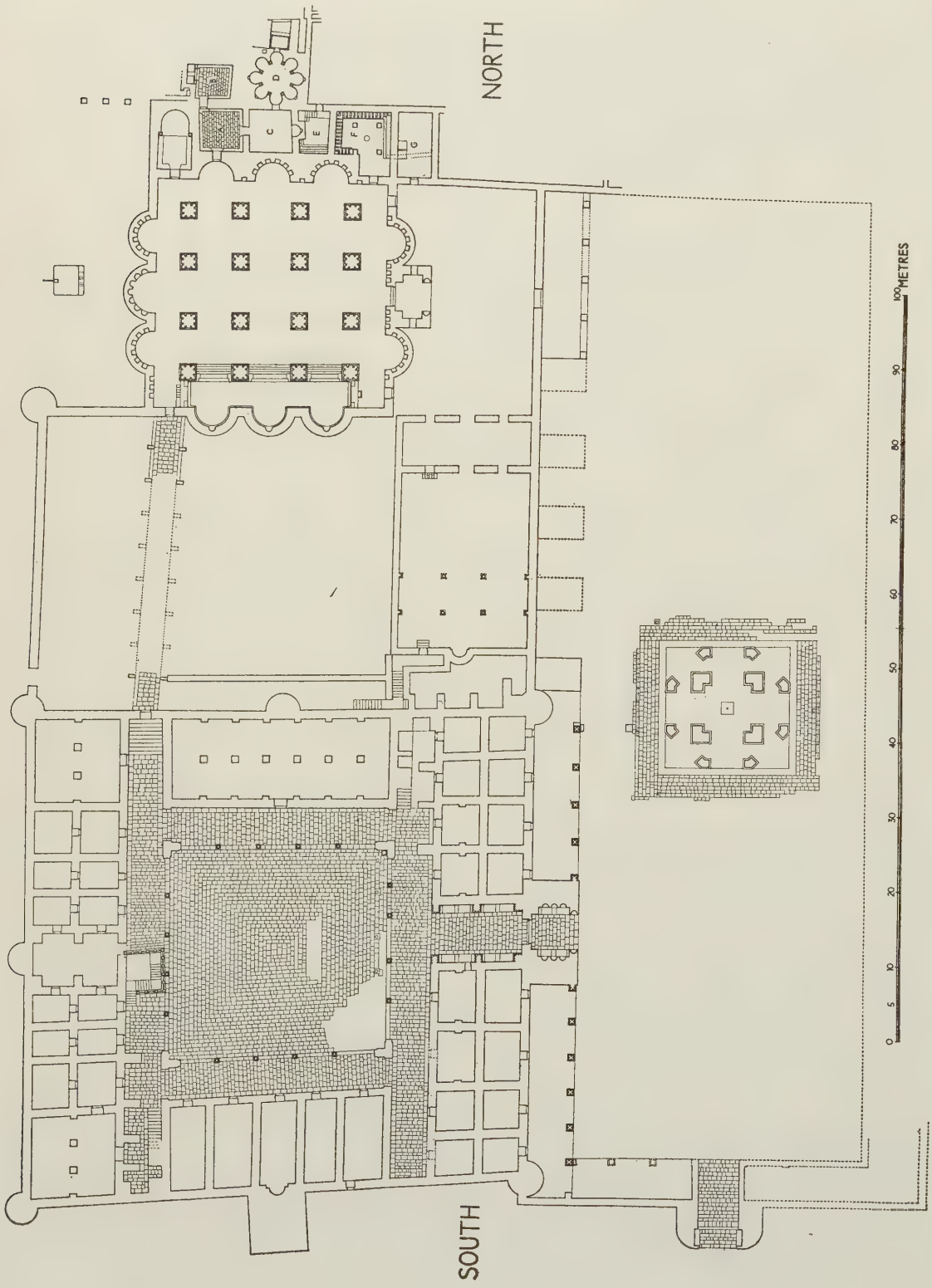

Fig. B. Khirbat al-Mafjar, General Plan of the Palace, Mosque, "Bath" (in the Northwest Corner) and Forecourt. (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

to it on the north side. In the latter, besides the "Diwan" or private reception room in the northwest corner and extensive latrines at the other end (F), there were a waiting room or vestiary (A) with benches on all four walls, which may have been more specifically the apodyterium, a smaller water-proofed room with two tanks (B), which may have been the frigidarium, and two heated rooms (C and D), which were the more temperate and the hotter caldaria respectively. Even certain architectural details of the "Bath Hall" have been explained in conformity with this interpretation: for instance, the niches along the walls are presumed to have held the bathers' clothes.[1] Other scholars have accepted this general hypothesis,[2] or (following J. Sauvaget's earlier explanation of the large halls at Qusayr 'Amra and Hammam as-Sarakh)[3] they have regarded the big pillared unit as the room where the users of the hammam rested after the hours spent in the bathing establishment.[4]

In addition to this interpretation of the function of Khirbat al-Mafjar, there has also been a kind of moral evaluation, based on the lavish, even luxurious aspect of the building. More specifically, the domed room in the entrance porch contained numerous male and female figures with bare chests, which have suggested either athletic activities or love-making. Certain elements in the decoration have also been construed as reflecting an eccentric, even whimsical personality (Fig. E and Fig. 60). A long, shallow plunge pool contained by a barrier with steps on the south side of the interior was judged in the same fashion. According to the *Kitab al-Aghani*, it was thought to have been used by the presumed owner of the mansion, Walid ibn Yazid, the heir-presumptive of the Caliph Hisham, as the locale for revelry. Wine was served by beautiful boys and girls while the prince listened to songs. After the performance he would jump stark naked into the basin which was filled with water or wine.[5] In the same vein, it has been hypothesized that the second of the tanks in the frigidarium on the north side was meant to contain wine.[6] Finally, a less specific but more suggestive explanation of the Diwan is that its use was conditioned by "his personal or private status,"[7] which an

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 50.

[2] Grabar, *op. cit.*, p. 231 (apodyterium), Creswell, *op. cit.*, pp. 562-570 (frigidarium).

[3] Jean Sauvaget, *La Mosquée omeyyade de Médine*. Paris 1947, p. 126.

[4] D. et J. Sourdel, *La Civilisation de l'Islam classique*. Paris 1968, fig. 40: la grande salle de repos du bain omayyade de Khirbat al-Mafjar. In the caption the hall is also called "salle de reception et de deshabillage à l'imitation de l'apodyterium des thermes antiques." This idea was first expressed in general terms by G. Lankester Harding (*The Antiquities of Jordan*. London, 1959, p. 181) where the "Hall" is called "a special retiring room." The one exception to the usual interpretation of the "Bath Hall" is to be found in R. A. Jairazbhoi's review of Hamilton's book (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1960, p. 73) where out of general historical considerations, he suggests a secondary use as a "banqueting hall." With this view this writer fully agrees as it is indicated by specific architectural features (see below pp. 60-62) although there is still another, primary purpose which has apparently so far escaped detection (see pp. 21-39).

[5] The pertinent passages from the *Kitab al-Aghani* are quoted by Alois Musil, *Ḳuṣejr 'Amra*. Wien, 1907, vol. 1, p. 159; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 104; *idem*, "Who built...?" pp. 65-67.

[6] Hamilton, *op. cit.* p. 67, fig. 4.

[7] Hamilton assumed that the Diwan had an official or ceremonial character and he saw in it "an audience room, perhaps even a throne room" (*Khirbat al Mafjar*, pp. 63-64, 103).

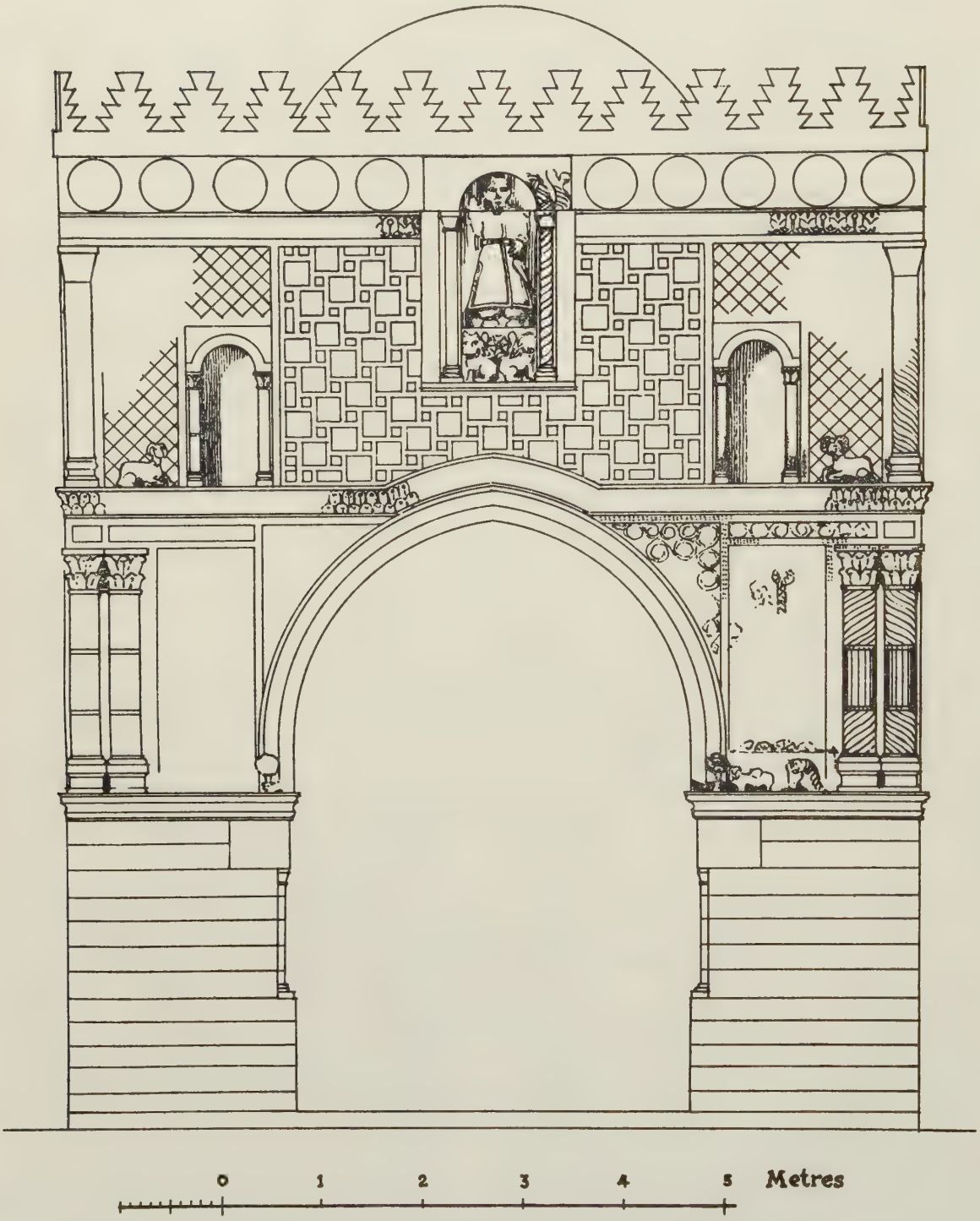

Fig. C. Khirbat al-Mafjar, Porch of the "Bath Hall" (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

unofficial but nevertheless often heard explanation has associated with orgiastic scenes. The "Bath Hall" has thus been quite officially called "Frivolity Hall."[1]

Scholars are generally aware of the two cultural strains apparent in the mansion as a whole and the "Bath Hall" in particular. It has been pointed out that the various Sasanian features—a statue of a caliph in Persian costume, stepped crenellations over the entrance porch (Fig. C), the four winged horses in the Diwan (Fig. D), and the extensive stucco reliefs—were combined with elements strongly inspired by Classical tradition, especially the floor mosaics, including the splendid scene of a lion and gazelles under a tree in the apse of the Diwan (Fig. 58). But this assumption of a rather general non-programmatic decoration—which has been called "a desert of meaningless ornament"[2]—has apparently prevented full recognition of this building's cultural implications, just as, in the study of Arabic epigraphy, Koranic inscriptions and common expressions of good wishes were formerly designated as "*formules banales.*"[3] This assessment of the decoration as eclectic and insignificant, suited to *nouveau riche* taste, has also affected the appreciation of the building itself.

How should we then evaluate the iconographic content of this impressive building? It seems important first to note certain weaknesses in the current interpretation in order to demonstrate that reappraisal is indeed imperative. For example, why should a functionally limited unit in a bathing establishment have a large and elaborate porch with such precise royal connotations as the figure of the caliph, two lions, battlements, and a large entrance on the order of a Roman triumphal arch with two additional doors to the outside? Why should the "Bath Hall" be so immense when the actual *hammam* is so small and appears to be a mere appendage of the "Hall?" Why should the "Hall" have a central dome and an ambulatory along its walls? Why should there be such ostentatious display in a mere "vestiary?" And why, finally, should a small bath for not more than fifteen users have not only a large "vestiary" but also toilet facilities for at least twenty-three (and possibly for as many as thirty-three) persons? (According to modern architectural standards these hygenic facilities would be sufficient for at least 250 persons).

Happily the 1959 excavation report by R. W. Hamilton in collaboration with G. U. Spencer Corbett and with a contribution on the wall paintings by Oleg Grabar is so explicit and so well documented that our proposed solutions for many (though not yet all) of the riddles posed by this building and its decoration can be fully supported. The writer feels greatly indebted to the numerous trenchant observations of the excavator and his associates.

The main clues are provided by the most unusual aspects of the "Bath Hall," especially by two elements in its decoration. The first is the only pictorial mosaic among the thirty-eight different panels decorating the floor. It shows a simple knife beside a fruit, from which a

[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 346, see also pp. 7, 64, 103-105, 235-236.

[2] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

[3] Jean David-Weill, "Encore une formule banale," *Ars Islamica*, vol. 15/16, 1951, pp. 136-137.

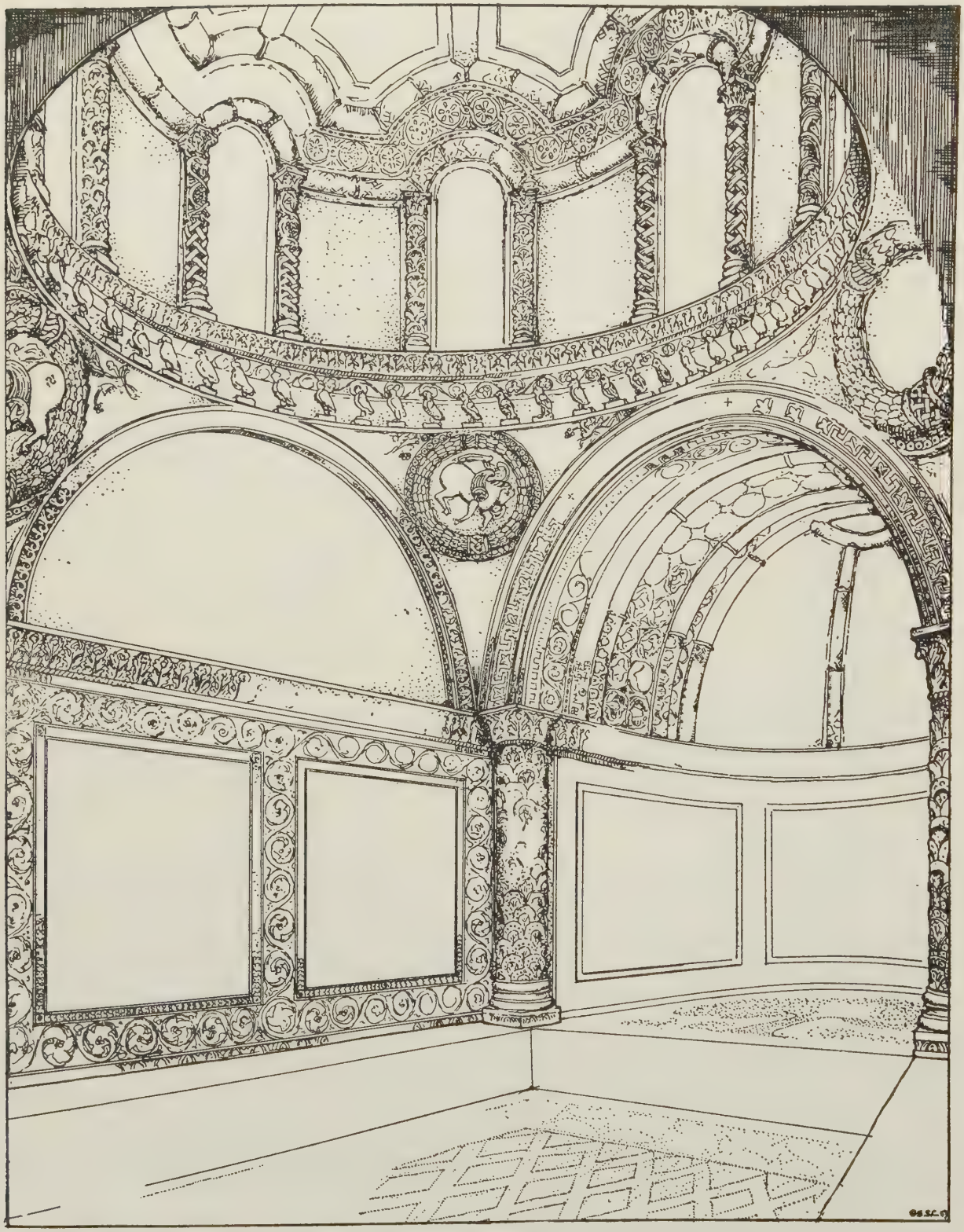

Fig. D. Khirbat al-Mafjar, Diwan—Restored Perspective View of the Interior (after Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

leafy shoot emanates (Fig. 59). According to the opinion of several (unnamed) Arab visitors to the site which was accepted by R. W. Hamilton, G. Lankaster Harding and the Rev. A. Gervase Mathew this picture has been interpreted as a kind of riddle: an allegorical repre-

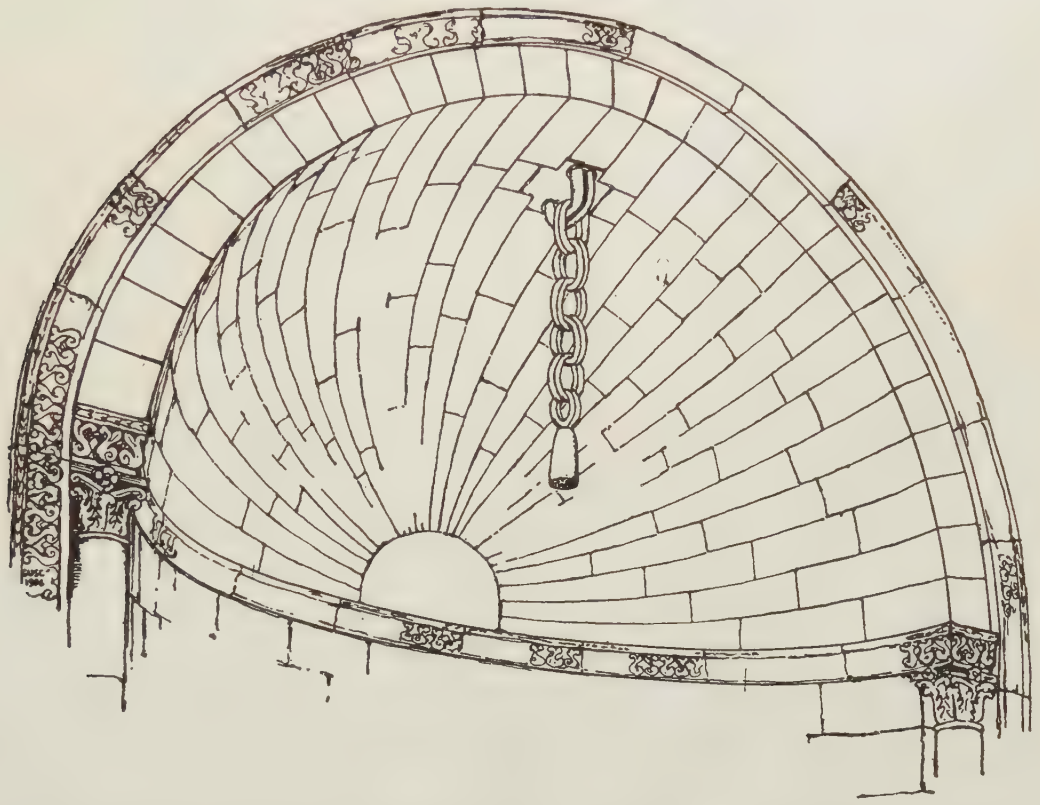

Fig. E. Khirbat al-Mafjar, "Bath Hall," Apse V, Semi-Dome as Reassembled (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

sentation of the caliph with his wife and her child.[1] But three considerations argue against such an interpretation. First, neither the Classical nor the Sasanian world seems to have developed vegetal or culinary symbolism for royalty, nor is there any trace of it in later Mus-

[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-337. That the interpretation of the scene as the caliphal family seems most unlikely has recently been brought out by another investigation; it showed that out of a fear of desecration "clearly meaningful and undisputed crosses are not very frequent on mosaic pavements (of churches) and that when they do occur they are usually in places not open to general traffic;" it also pointed out that the Edict of 427 A.D. forbade the sign of Christ on the floor (Ernst Kitzinger, "The Threshold of the Holy Shrine. Observations on Floor Mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem," in *Kyriakon. Festschrift für Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann. Münster, Westf., 1971, pp. 640-641, 646). A critical attitude toward Hamilton's opinion is to be found in Jairazhboi's review (*op. cit.*, p. 73), but no other solution was offered by him.

lim iconography. Second, in such a male-centered civilization as the Arab world it seems unlikely that the lord of the mansion would be represented by a narrow-bladed, unpretentious knife while the bigger, more conspicuous fruit placed in the center of the composition should stand for his spouse. Finally, and more seriously, it seems most improbable that the one specifically royal representation in the building should have been on the floor and thus exposed to the utmost expression of disrespect from all and sundry: to the possibility of being stepped on.

The second clue—like the one just described, thought to be rather bizarre in nature—is a chain with a cone-shaped pendant (altogether 1.5 meters long) cut from a single block of soft conglomerate limestone (Fig. 60), which originally hung from a ring affixed to the top of the very same niche in which the mosaic of the "caliph and his wife" was found (Fig. E). It may thus be possible to perceive some basic connection between these two features. The chain and its pendant have been compared to "those trick devices, more often wrought in wood or ivory which are still offered to tourists in Oriental bazaars." The excavator could not "imagine any practical purpose for which the chain could have served, neither, for example, to support a lamp nor as a stage property for some gymnastic display." So the only remaining suggestion was that it represented "some ingenious mason's tribute to the eccentric personality of Walid ibn Yazid," the assumed owner of the whole establishment.[1]

To "break the code," as it were, it is necessary to be fully aware of the locations of the two unusual features in Exedra V, opposite the entrance from the porch. Indeed, as Hamilton states of the chain and its attached object: "Pendant there on the axis of the ball, it would meet the eye of all who passed the threshold of the main door." But there is more to the problem than that. This exedra is at the end of the central nave, which is wider than the other passages leading to the west wall, 5.50-5.60 meters compared to 4.40-4.60 meters for the intermediary aisles flanking it, and 2.50-3.36 meters for the four lower aisles closest to the walls. Furthermore, this central nave, which one entered through an ornately decorated projecting porch, with royal symbols on the outside and an elaborately domed chamber in its interior, also had a dome in the center of the nave, the highest point of elevation in the structure, with a large, very spectacular mosaic on the floor beneath it (Figs. F. and G, Fig. 61).

Finally, a quick glance suffices to show that Exedra V, of all the apses in the building, was by far the richest in decoration (Fig. H). For instance, instead of the usual group of six square niches, each crowned by a simple round arch and with a single niche above it on the wall, found in at least six of the apses, Exedra V had seven round niches, whose more richly decorated horseshoe-shaped arches rested on colonettes, while above it there were apparently two niches whose arches rested on triple colonettes. Exedra V was also unique in that its semi-

[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 91, pl. XII, 6, where the chain and pendant are published horizontally as they could apparently be photographed only in this way.

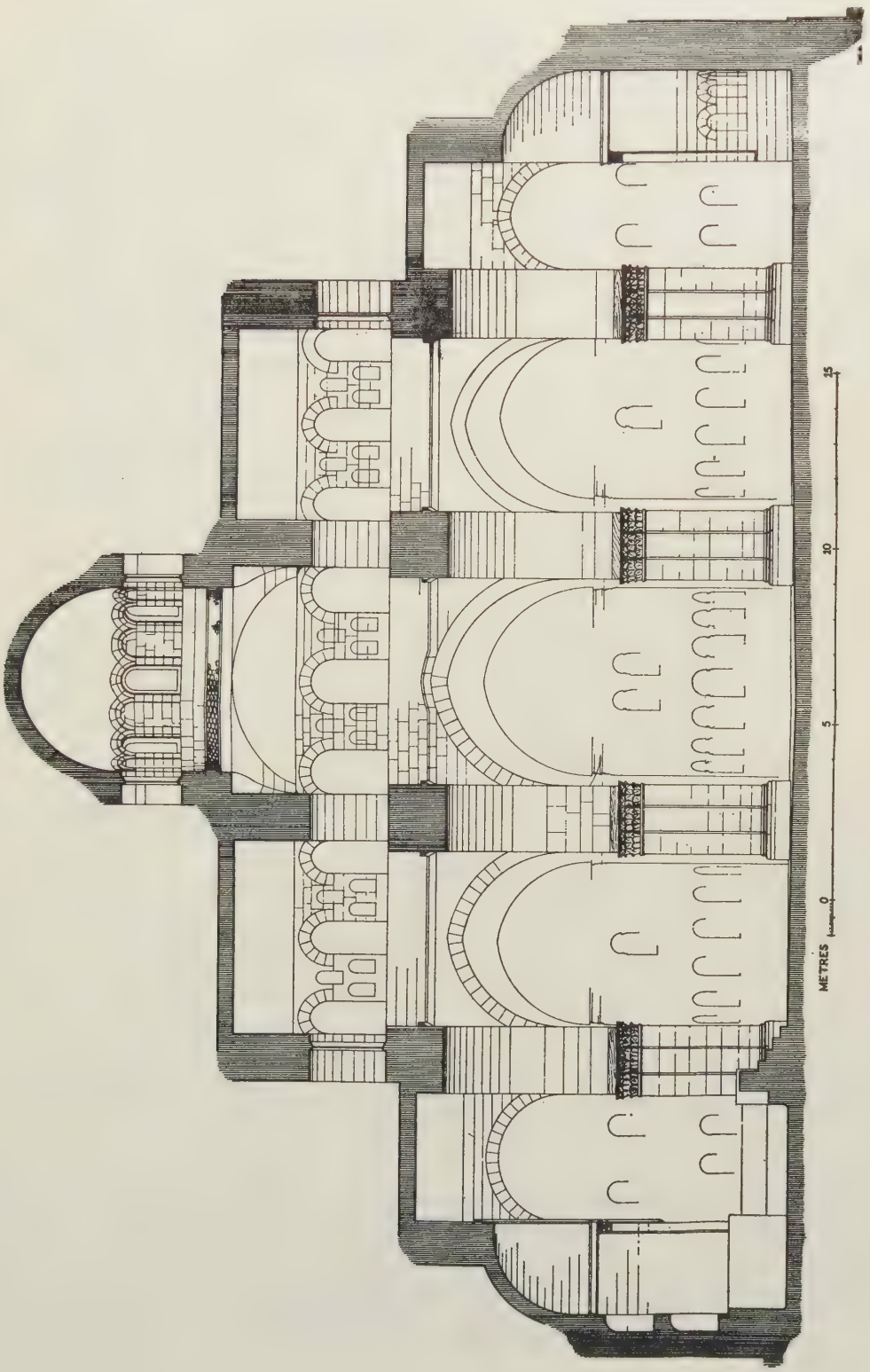

Fig. F. Khirbat al-Mafjar, Inferred Cross-section, Looking West (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

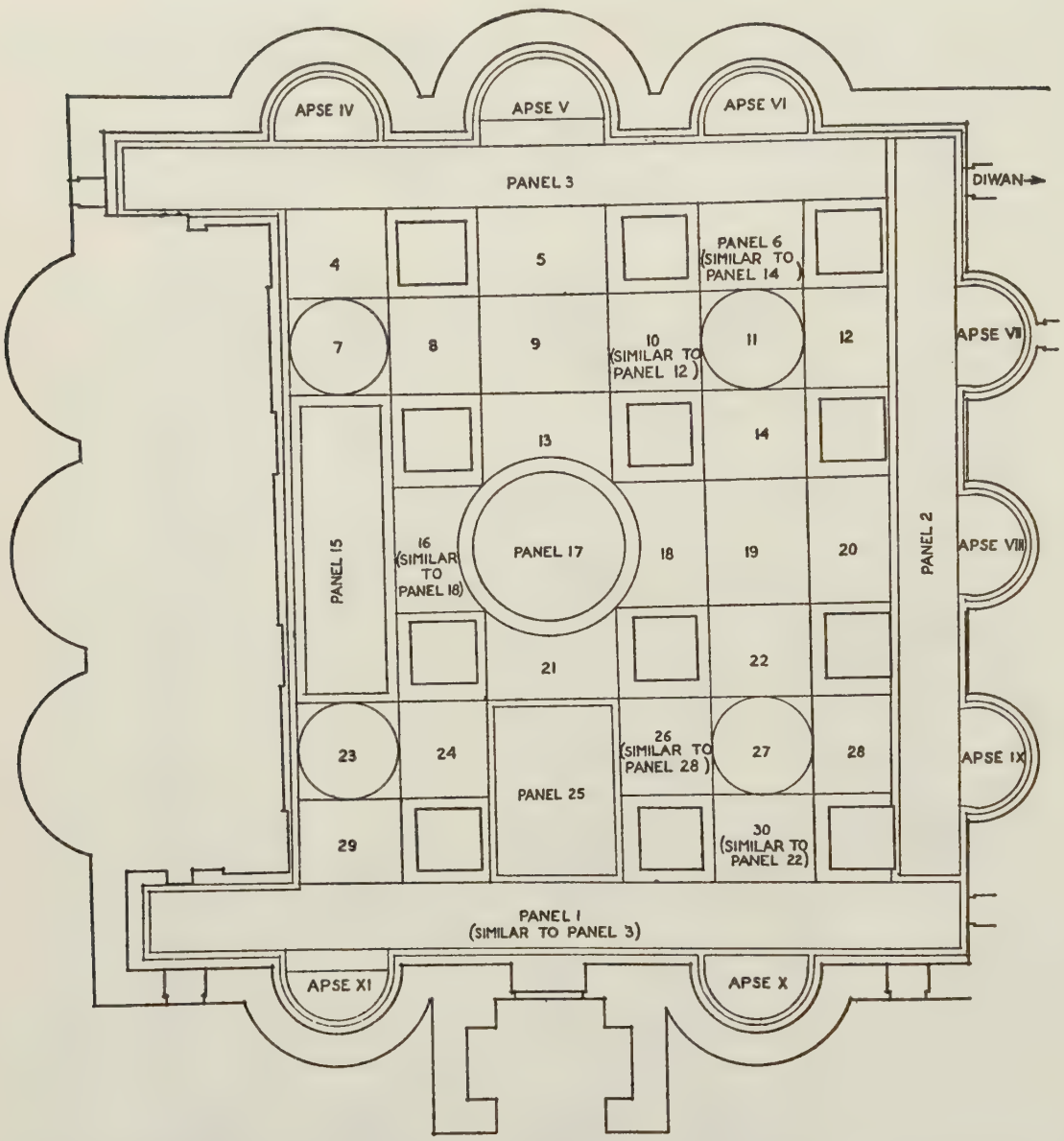

Fig. G. Khirbat al-Mafjar, "Bath Hall," Index Plan of Mosaic Floor (After Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

dome was built of courses radiating from a round unit in the center of its lower edge, whereas the other semidomes had the usual horizontal stone courses (Figs. E and H). One other aspect distinguished this part of the elevation: "the masonry of the semidomes was plastered white, except for Apse V, of which the archivolt had a painted border of fretwork and floral designs in alternate panels," and in the same apse "the moulding which surmounted the

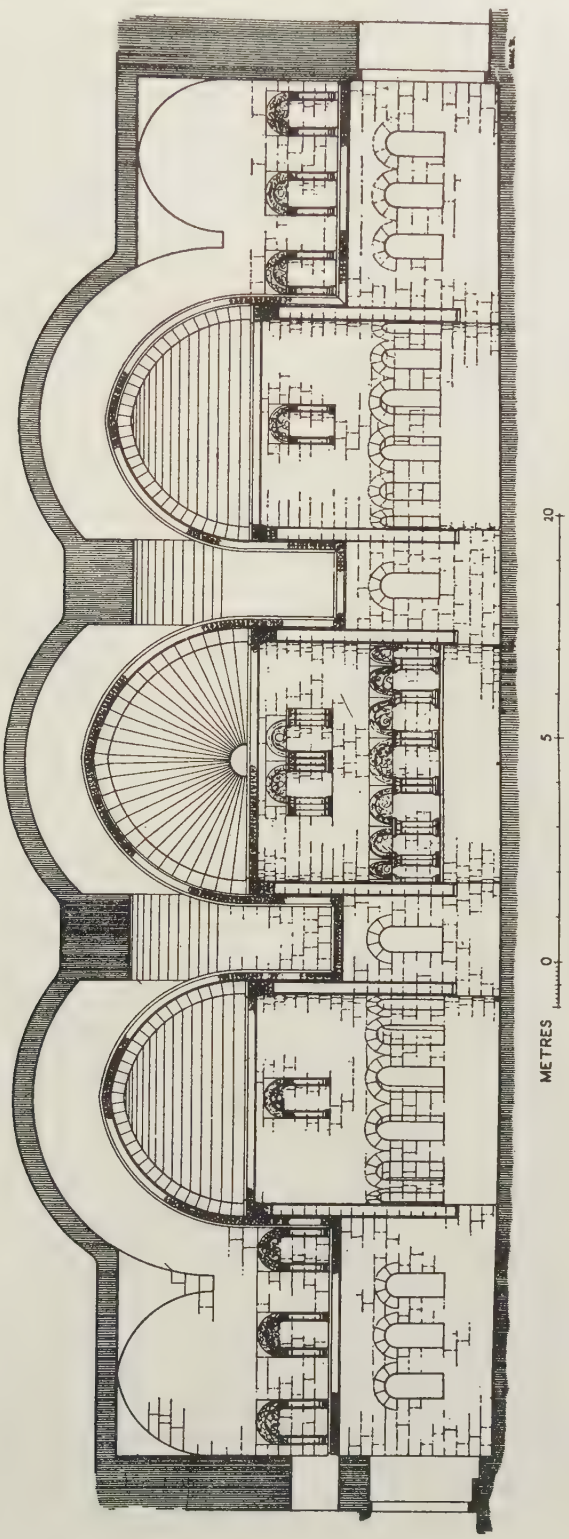

Fig. H. Khirbat al-Mafjar, "Bath Hall," West Ambulatory; Inferred Long-section and Elevation.
(After Hamilton, drawing by Albert Henschel).

archivolt was also painted red, green and yellow."[1] The floor decoration was also different. Whereas all the other apses had single, all-over patterns framed by simple, unified borders (Figs. 62 and 63), Exedra V had two more elaborate patterns, set off in front by a wide border of three different patterns, with the mysterious "caliph and wife" panel in the center (Fig. 64). The conclusions are obvious: first, the central nave is axial (though this scheme is counterbalanced by a centralized arrangement around the dome in the middle of the building and the huge, round mosaic below it), and, secondly, Exedra V is of singular importance, possibly the focal point of the whole interior.

For the most striking and unusual feature of this most important unit of the interior, the mysterious stone object suspended in the niche by a chain, there exists, happily, a parallel, at least in historical sources: the "hanging crown" in the throne hall of the Sasanian kings at Ctesiphon.[2] Our source is Ibn Ishaq (704-767), a young contemporary of the Caliph Hisham, whose *Sirat an-Nabi (Life of the Prophet)* has come down to us in the edition of Ibn Hisham (d. 833). There it is stated that

> the Kisra-Khosrow I Anoshirvan, [531-578] used to sit in his audience-hall where was his crown, like a mighty bowl... set with rubies, emeralds and pearls, with gold and silver, suspended by a chain of gold from the top of an arch in this his audience-hall, and his neck could not support the crown, but he was veiled by draperies till he had taken his seat in this his audience-hall, and had introduced his head within his crown, and had settled himself in his place, whereupon the draperies were withdrawn. And no one who had not previously seen him looked upon him without kneeling in reverence before him.[3]

This association of the "hanging crown" with Khosrow I is repeated by Tabari (839-923), who reports it in connection with Khosrow II Parviz (590-628):

> This throne vault was so superbly built that no one had seen anything like it elsewhere. In it his crown was suspended and he sat there when he gave an audience to people.[4]

The practice is again related by Thaʿalibi (961-1038):

> The crown of Khosrow II was of 60 *mann* pure gold studded with pearls as big as sparrow eggs and with garnet-colored rubies... and emeralds... A golden chain, 70

[1] Grabar in Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 320; see also p. 91.

[2] The pertinent texts have been collected in "Exkurs I: Die hängende Krone", in Kurt Erdmann, "Die Entwicklung der sasanidischen Krone," *Ars Islamica*, vol. 15/16, 1951, pp. 114-117. The following makes full use of this valuable study. For an earlier short presentation of the "hanging crown" see Arthur Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. Second edition. Copenhagen, 1944, pp. 397-398. In the Persian translation of this work (Tehran, 1317) the crown is described as follows: "tāj... bevasīleh-ye zanjīrī az ṭalā be-saqf āvīkhteh būd" (p. 278).

[3] Quoted after Tabari, ed. T. Nöldeke. Leyden, 1879, pp. 221-222; Erdmann, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 304; Erdmann, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

> cubits long, hung from the vault of the palace on which the crown was fastened, so that it touched the head of the king without troubling him or being a load on him.[1]

Although the custom of suspending the crown is thus generally believed to have been introduced by Khosrow I and to have been adopted by subsequent Sasanian kings, Mirkh(w)and (d. 1498) reports that already at the election of the young Shapur II (309-379) the grandees of the realm had had the crown suspended over the child's head and had paid homage to him according to the usual protocol.[2] According to this very late and possibly aetiological explanation, the suspension was thus thought to have been installed on account of the tender age of the new king—although it was more generally thought to have become the rule for adult rulers from Khosrow I on.

The custom of suspending the crown from the vault and over "the ivory throne" is also repeatedly mentioned by Ferdowsi (932-1021) in connection with five mythical Iranian kings and four Sasanian rulers.[3] According to him the crown is said to have been suspended for the ruling king not only in the permanent throne hall of the palace in the capital city, but also wherever he resided, even for short periods during his travels. It was also suspended in this fashion over the mother shortly before the delivery of the royal son, over the child after its birth, over the body of the dead king placed on his ivory throne, and in his mausoleum. That means it was regarded as a basic, visible symbol of royalty, and as such it was, of course, especially important at enthronements, audiences, and public feasts.

With regards to this institution we even have a historical account indicating a cultural interaction, because the hanging crown was said to have entered Byzantine court ceremonial; this is implied by the report, written about 1170, of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela's visit to Constantinople:

> The Emperor (Manuel) had built for himself a palace at the shores of the sea, to which he gave the name of Blachernes. The walls and columns he had covered with gold and silver and the paintings represented former wars, as well as those which he had conducted himself. His throne was of gold, incrusted with jewels, and above it hung on a golden chain the golden, jewel-studded crown whose value is unaccountable, as its luster makes one dispense with light at night.[4]

[1] Ed. H. Zotenberg. Paris, 1900, pp. 699-700; Erdmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

[2] *Histoire des rois de Perse de la dynastie des Sassanides*, tr. S. de Sacy. Paris, 1793, p. 306; Erdmann, *op. cit.*, 115.

[3] See Erdmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

[4] *Die Reisebeschreibung des R. Benjamin von Tudela*, ed. et tr. L. Grünhut and M. N. Adler. Frankfurt a. Main-Jerusalem, 1903-1904, vol. 2, p. 17; Erdmann, *op. cit.*, p. 117. Since it is unlikely that R. Benjamin ever saw the crowned Byzantine emperor in his palace, he must have reported a folk tale. In the same way Evliya Çelebi gives a fictitious account of what the Turkish Ambassador saw at the Imperial Court in Vienna in 1665: "when an extraordinary privy council took place on account of our Pasha-Ambassador, the Emperor had the crown . . . suspended . . . in such a way that it appeared to hang on 18 golden and jewelled chains from a small vault over his throne." (*Im Reiche des Goldenen Apfels*, tr. and expl. by R. F.

The concept of the hanging royal symbol was to all appearances taken over by the Umayyad owner of the mansion; yet it is obvious that the suspended object in Apse V is not a crown, nor, apparently, is it a contraption to which a crown could have been fixed. From the total setting it can, however, be assumed that the cone-shaped unit must have represented a kind of headgear proper for a ruler and worn by him on official occasions, and also one worn by the Umayyad caliphal house. We suggest that it represents one of three types of official headgear worn by the Umayyads, the one called *qalansuwa* (or *qalansiya*), more specifically, *qalansuwa tawila*—"*le bonnet haut en forme de pain de sucre, porté par les califes (abbasides)...*" (as defined by R. Dozy).[1] The others were the *taj*, or crown, and the *'imama*, or turban, neither of which, obviously, can have been intended by the craftsman who made the object at Khirbat al-Mafjar. As the qalansuwa was commonly worn in post-Umayyad periods by Muslims across a broad social range and by non-Muslims as well,[2] it has been often mentioned in Arabic texts and discussed by Western scholars. These discussions have, however, been based almost exclusively on literary and historical sources, without reference to pictorial representations, for no early examples of this tall bonnet seem to have been preserved.

We shall turn now to the results of this earlier research, especially as it applies to Umayyad times. We shall begin with an early reference to this headgear, one of the most pertinent such references, in a passage in Alois Musil's famous work on Qusayr 'Amra, in which he speaks of the future Caliph al-Walid II (the Umayyad generally thought to have built Khirbat al-Mafjar). Musil remarks that "the prince usually wore a precious headgear which resembled a sugar loaf and had gold decoration."[3] This comment, together with the texts on the "hanging crown," clearly points to the cone-shaped stone object in Exedra V.

The early history and use of the qalansuwa deserves, however, further elucidation based on the research of various scholars. Let us begin with one of the more recent and most comprehensive statements, by the late Reuben Levy:

> The Abbasid period brought an influx of Persian clothes, so that the Persian qabā' and sarāwīl (drawers) and the tall hat known as the qalansuwa ṭawīla (or simply as the ṭawīla), became popular articles of wear. Frequently the latter appears to have been cone-shaped and tapered to a point (Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 377). The ordinary short qalansuwa had long been known and worn. The Prophet is credited with one (Ya'qūbī, *Historiae*, II, 97f) and the Caliph 'Uthmān is described as wearing one when he received his wife

Kreutel. Graz, 1957, p. 166). Similarly the huge crown of King Ahasverus in a drawing made in 1893 in Safed by one Josef Geiger is suspended on a hook (Fig. 90, after Y. Shahar, *Osef Feuchtwanger*. Jerusalem, 1971, color pl. on p. 160). These two parallels were kindly pointed out to me by Professor Otto Kurz and Mr. Erwin Offenbacher.

[1] R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. Leyden, 1881, vol. 2 p. 401.

[2] This was already fully recognized by Dozy *(loc. cit.,)*.

[3] Musil, *Ḳuṣejr 'Amra*, vol. 1, p. 157 and footnote 349 quoting the *Kitab al-Aghani*, vol. 6, p. 144.

Nā'ila (*Aghānī*, XV, 71). In Umayyad times the Caliph Walīd I preached in one (*Fragmenta Hist. Arab.*, p. 7) and Ḥunayn, the Christian camel-hirer and poet of Ḥīra, is said to have worn a tall one in the reign of Hishām (*Aghānī* II, 121, l. 7), but even the Arabs of the Jāhiliya are known to have regarded their variety as Persian (G. Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, p. 237). The shorter kind was probably shaped like a skull cap or a fez and was made of fur or cloth (Cf. Ibn Sa'd, VI, 196, and VII (II), p. 25, l.5), and it was worn with a turban around it. The tall shape of the *ṭawīla*, which might be made of silk (Ṭabarī, III, 1442), was maintained by means of an internal framework of wood or reeds (*Aghānī*, IX, 121, 11.), so that it resembled the long tapering wine-jars known as *dann*, whence the tall qalansuwa came also to be known as a danniya (*Aghānī*, X, 123; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, I, 373; Badi' al-Zamān Hamadāni, *Rasā'il* [Beyrout, 1890], p. 168).[1]

From this resume it might be assumed that the qalansuwa tawila appeared mainly in Abbasid times, especially as Dozy says so, too. This belief is apparently based on a statement by Tabari, that al-Mansur (754-775), the second Abbasid caliph, had introduced the tall qalansuwa and the wearing of black silk.[2] The archaeological evidence from Khirbat al-Mafjar now disproves this assumption of an Abbasid origin.

Ernst Herzfeld remarks that the qalansuwa tawila was placed on the head of the caliph when homage was paid to him, and he believes that it had already become customary in Umayyad times.[3] Björkman has pointed out a passage in Yaqut, who tells us that this part of the costume was first adopted during the reign of the first Umayyad by 'Abbad b. Ziyad from inhabitants of Qandahar, which he conquered.[4] This statement is contradicted by the archaeological evidence (to be examined), which suggests an earlier Iranian origin.

Oleg Grabar is still another author who has dealt with this subject, as he has discovered two important references. According to Tabari and Ya'qubi, al-Walid I wore a qalansuwa when he inaugurated the new Mosque of Madina: evidence of its use by an Umayyad caliph at an important formal occasion.[5] According to a passage in al-Jahiz' *Kitab al-Taj*, "al-Hajjaj used to appear in audiences in a qalansuwa and no one was allowed to wear a similar one." Before this statement, al-Jahiz relates that no one was permitted to appear in dresses like those worn by the Sasanian king.[6] Grabar recognized that this passage illustrates the cere-

[1] Reuben Levy, "Notes on Costume from Arabic Sources," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1935, pp. 324-325.

[2] R. B. Serjeant, "Material for a History of Islamic Textiles up to the Mongol Conquest," *Ars Islamica*, vol. 1942, p. 69, footnote 1, quoting Tabari, *Annales*, ed. M. J. de Goeje. Leyden, 1879-1906, series III, vol. I, pp. 417-418.

[3] Ernst Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra* (*Die Ausgrabungen von Samarra*, vol. 6). Hamburg, 1948, p. 142, n.5.

[4] W. Björkman, "Ḳalansuwa," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leyden-London 1927, vol. 2, pp. 677-678.

[5] Oleg Grabar, *Ceremonial and Art at the Umayyad Court*. Princeton Ph. D. thesis, 1955, (typescript manuscript), p. 58 quoting Tabari, II, pp. 1233-1234; Ya'qubi, II, pp. 339-341.

[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 59 and footnote 56, quoting *Kitab al-Taj*, ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha, 1914, p. 57. There is some question about the authorship of this text, but even if it was not by al-Jahiz, it was, according to C. Brockelmann, by one of his contemporaries

monial importance of the qalansuwa and its Sasanian origin, but it also shows that a person other than the reigning caliph could wear it.

Finally, in his study of the early history of textiles, R. B. Serjeant mentions a passage in Mas'udi that refers to the extravagant and improper use by the Umayyad Caliph Sulaiman (714-717) of patterned silk *(washi)* for various costume pieces, including the qalansuwa. All his friends, governors, and attendants wore this costly material, and "even the cook entered his presence only in patterned silk, used by him also for the tall qalansuwa (tawila)."[1] This reference makes it clear that the tall bonnet was a very important and elegant part of the dress and that its use by a servant was thought to be most inappropriate.

All this evidence adds up to the fact that the qalansuwa tawila, which looked like the old fashioned "sugar loaf," was a highly regarded form of official headgear, worn by the Umayyad caliphs and their grandees (and occasionally even by lesser folk) at important functions, just as the caliphs used the taj, or crown, as shown by a sculptured figure in Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi.[2] To suspend such a qalansuwa on a chain in what we must now recognize as the "Throne Apse" at Khirbat al-Mafjar was therefore fully appropriate especially for a prince known to have favored this form of head covering. The only change is in the material: stone was used at Khirbat al-Mafjar (though it may have been gilded or colored) instead of the gold of Sasanian times. Apparently this variation in shape and material fully satisfied the symbolic and ceremonial requirements of the time.

As headgear the qalansuwa had undoubtedly had a long pre-Islamic development; in earlier times it often had lappets over the ears. Herzfeld was reminded of the *kyrbasia* of the Achaemenids.[3] Björkman mentions the high, pointed bonnets in the painting of the "Sacrifice of Conon" (Fig. 65) in the Temple of the Palmyrene gods at Dura-Europos (first century A.D.).[4] Other examples include the similarly shaped high caps at Nimrud Dagh (first century B.C.),[5] and in various Parthian reliefs and statues found at Hatra and Susa (Fig. 66).[6] Closer to Umayyad times are examples on such various Sasanian monuments as a graffito in Persepolis, the rock relief in Firuzabad (third century A.D.; Fig. 67), and a textile in Persian style from Antinoë in Lyons, dated to the sixth century.[7] In Umayyad times the ordinary or "low

(*Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*. Leyden, 1937-1949, Supplement, vol. 1, p. 246.)

[1] Serjeant, "Material...," p. 67, quoting Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 400. A later important use of the qalansuwa was at the reception for the Byzantine Embassy by the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir in 917 (Guy Le Strange, "A Greek Embassy to Baghdad in 917 A.D.," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1897, p. 43.

[2] Daniel Schlumberger, "Les Fouilles de Qasr el-Heir el-Gharbi (1936-1938). Rapport préliminaire, deuxième article," *Syria*, vol. 20, 1939, p. 353, pl. XLVI, 1. Schlumberger points out that one had previously believed that the taj was an Abbasid innovation, but that this particular find had corrected this assumption. As we have seen the same rectification has now to be made for the qalansuwa.

[3] Herzfeld, *Geschichte*, p. 142.

[4] Björkman, "Ḳalansuwa," p. 677; often illustrated, see, e.g. Ghirshman, *Parthians and Sasanians*, fig. 59.

[5] *Idem. loc. cit.*, figs. 73-76.

[6] *Idem, loc. cit.*, figs. 70, 100, 102; see also fig. 82.

[7] Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I.* Chicago, 1953,

model" qalansuwa appears on the extraordinary dirham with the effigy of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, struck in Damascus in 695 (Fig. 68).[1] The "tall model" is shown on what is apparently an Umayyad silk woven after a Persian model, part of the Wolvinius Altar in S. Ambrogio in Milan (Fig. 69), and in the simplified version of this same textile design on a fabric from the Cunibert Reliquary in the Diocesan Museum of Cologne.[2] Like the suspended chain over the throne, this particular form of headgear was also therefore of Iranian origin, and both were adopted by the Umayyads. Considering the fact that the tall qalansuwa was symbolically represented in hunting scenes, one may assume that its shape was not shown as elongated as it was for the actual ceremonies of an elegant seigneur which were rendered in the Throne Apse of Khirbat al-Mafjar. The memory of this fashion persisted a long time, since Persian miniatures of the fourteenth and fifteenth century still show occasionally pre-Islamic dignitaries and *mobeds* with very high pointed hats (Fig. 89).

At this point a word should be said about the semidome of Exedra V. We have noted that, in contrast to all the others which were built of horizontal courses, this one was constructed with voussoirs radiating from a center at the back and thus deliberately emphasized (Fig. H). The obvious intent was to imitate a scalloped shell in stone. In the Umayyad period this form was especially used for secular throne niches, and it thus occurs in what seems to be the throne apse of a palace structure on a mosaic in the Great Mosque of Damascus (Fig. 70). Eventually the scalloped shell appeared in mihrabs, as one of the earliest preserved examples, generally assumed to have served the Mosque of Mansur in Baghdad, indicates.[3]

Whereas the preceding investigations have dealt with the early Muslim and Iranian aspects of the qalansuwa and its suspension in the Throne Apse, two apparently related issues should also be mentioned, at least briefly. A more extensive discussion of these problems would lead us too far away, in space and time, from our main topic.

The first issue is the much discussed history of the papal tiara, or pointed bonnet, which was, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, used for the first time by Pope Constantine I (708-715).[4] It was called *camelaucum*, a term currently explained as referring to the camel hair

pl. 199 B; Ernst Kitzinger, "The Horse and Lion Tapestry at Dumbarton Oaks. A Study in Coptic and Sasanian Textile Design," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 3, 1946, fig. 32.

[1] George C. Miles, "Miḥrāb and ʿAnazah: A Study in Early Islamic Iconography," *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*. Locust Valley, N.Y. 1952, pp. 156-171, pl. XXVIII, especially pp. 169-170 and pl. XXVIII, 3. At the time of writing this article Dr. Miles was not certain which of the three possible headgears—taj, ʿimamah or qalansuwa—was represented on the coin of ʿAbd al-Malik, but there seems now little doubt that the image of the caliph shows a low qalansuwa.

[2] Otto von Falke, *Decorative Silks*. Third edition. New York, 1936, fig. 58.

[3] Often illustrated, e.g. F. Sarre und Ernst Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*. Berlin, 1911-1920, vol. 2, fig. 185, vol. 3, pl. XLV; K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*. Oxford, 1940, vol. 2 pl. 120, d; Miles, "Miḥrāb...," pl. XXVIII, 9.

[4] For a general discussion see H. Leclercq, "Tiare," in F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*. Paris, 1953, vol. 15 part 2, cols. 2292-2294; Percy Ernst Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*. Stuttgart, 1954-1955, vol. 1, pp. 52-53.

originally used for this type of headgear. There are, however, variants of this odd term, specifically *calamaucus* and *calamaucum*. Between 685 and 741 there were several popes of Syrian or Greek origin, and it is possible that the introduction of this formal cover of the head was among the innovations made by these successors of St. Peter, since, as we have seen, the general shape was used earlier by the Persians and by various other Oriental peoples. It is startling to observe that the pope (and before him possibly high imperial dignitaries) was wearing headgear resembling the qalansuwa at just about the time that the latter achieved formal acceptance by the Umayyads. The first syllables of at least the two variant terms that we have cited are remarkably similar to those of the non-Arabic term, qalansuwa, used by the Arabs.

The second issue is the suspension of an ostrich egg above the Madonna enthroned before an apse capped by a scalloped shell, as in Piero della Francesca's altarpiece for Count Federigo of Urbino, now in the Brera (Fig. 71). All the symbolism and allusions in the individual features of this work have been explained by Millard Meiss,[1] but the whole *mise-en-scène* deserves possibly renewed consideration, in view of its striking parallel to the setting at Khirbat al-Mafjar. These two are obviously structurally parallel, and both depart from the standard use of ostrich eggs suspended in churches and mosques, usually in connection with lamps. At Khirbat al-Mafjar, however, the object suspended in the apse is an elongated cone, whereas in the altarpiece it is an egg; both are, however, fixed over enthroned regal persons. If there is a connection between the two instances, how it spanned a gap of about 650 years remains a mystery. It may well be that the custom of hanging a qalansuwa in a throne apse had gone out of fashion in the Near East or had become so rare an institution that its meaning was no longer grasped by visiting foreigners. Impressed as they were by the curious rite, they then adapted the more widely used ostrich egg for this particular function. Possible missing links in this development include the suspended crown that Benjamin of Tudela reported as existing about 1170 in the Palace of Constantinople and an imitation ostrich egg of green glazed pottery made in late-twelfth-century Iran, though the function of the latter is not known (Figs. 72 and 73).

Once we recognize that Exedra V represents a Throne Apse, the question arises whether or not the floor mosaics—or at least certain parts of them—have special significance, possibly

It seems worthwhile noting that in Italian paintings a similar form of headgear is given to the high priest of the Jewish temple (see Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*. New York, Harper Torch Books, 1964, figs. 12-14, 18, 28, 36).

[1] Millard Meiss, "Ovum Struthionis. Symbol and Allusion in Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altarpiece," *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene*, ed. Dorothy Miner. Princeton, 1954, pp. 92-101; *idem*, "Addendum Ovologicum," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 36, 1954, pp. 221-222; see also M. A. Lavin, "Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altarpiece: A Pledge of Fidelity," *op. cit.*, vol. 51, 1969, p. 371, n. 34. Quite recently attention has been drawn to the much earlier fresco above the tomb of Antonio dei Fissiraga (d. 1327) in Lodi (Isa Ragusa, "The Egg Reopened," *op. cit.*, vol. 53, 1971, pp. 435-443). Here the ostrich egg is suspended directly over the Christ-child (rather than over the Madonna) thus recalling the Persian custom with regards the royal Sasanian baby as described by Ferdowsi (see p. 29).

even as additional forms of royal symbolism. Let us begin with the mysterious central square of the border, whose current interpretation as "the caliph with wife and offspring" (Fig. 59) was discussed above (p. 21-24).

To understand the design properly we should apply the principle that has been used successfully in other aulic settings, from Persepolis to Lashkari Bazar, and for pagan, Christian, and Muslim monuments: that the given imagery is related to the situation or activity that took place in or near the particular spot. Among contemporary or near-contemporary Christian and Muslims examples, we can note several. Epiphanios, a monk of Constantinople who wrote before 820, states that "the two grottoes [of the Church of the Nativity in Bethelehem] are... decorated with images which represent the event as it happened."[1] A mosaic still existing in the apse of Justinian's Church in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, shows the "fiery bush," which is said to have burned right on this spot;[2] an image of a bush is found even on the first wooden door of that church, which was carved during the Fatimid period. Finally, the central alcove in the Throne Room at Qusayr ʿAmra, where the Umayyad princely owner was at times formally enthroned, has a painting of a ruler enthroned in just this manner, with two attendants and in a symbolic cosmological setting.[3]

We must recall that Khirbat al-Mafjar was the mansion of an agricultural estate.[4] With this basic fact in mind, and taking into consideration the iconographic principle of "the pictorialized happening of the site" we must conclude that the picture is most likely that of an offering made on that spot—the presentation of a highly esteemed fruit to the lord of the plantation. It may be a welcoming gift, the first produce of the season, the symbol of the tithe, or possibly a kind of local hors d'oeuvre; any of these suggestions might have been pictorically rendered and clearly understood by contemporaries of the Umayyads. Nowadays, though, it is difficult, if not impossible, to select one explanation over the others. In any case the main object seems to be a fruit (possibly a citrus fruit[5] such as the *ethrog*), which, like the offering in the Yusuf Sura of the Koran (XII, v. 31), required a knife to be eaten, as it was either too large or had an inedible skin. The fruit is not an exotic product but must have been locally grown, for it occurs repeatedly in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock (Fig. 74), and is already found on the Byzantine mosaic in the Dominus Flevit Monastery on the Mount of Olives, dated to the sixth or seventh century.[6] Topographically, the little vignette must have

[1] Migne, *Patrologia, Series Graeca*, CXX, col. 264, quoted by Marguerite van Berchem, "The Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and of the Great Mosque in Damascus," in Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Second edition., vol. 1, part 1, p. 243.

[2] Kurt Weitzmann," The Mosaics in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 110, No. 6, December 1966, pp. 393-396, figs. 3-6, 9; for a color reproduction see *idem*, "Mount Sinai's Holy Treasures," *National Geographic*, vol. 125, 1964, p. 110.

[3] Musil, *Ḳuṣejr ʿAmra*, vol. 2, pls. 8, 15.

[4] Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, pp. 5-7; Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 18, 1964, pp. 74-76.

[5] If this is indeed a citrus fruit, its high esteem in the Greek and Arab tradition should be stressed (F. Rosenthal, *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam*. Leiden, 1971, p. 13).

[6] Van Berchem, "The Mosaics...," fig. 179.

been just in front of the throne; iconographically, it would be comparable, on a minor scale, to the tribute bearers on the walls of the Apadana of Persepolis.[1]

An interpretation of the other mosaics is less certain, primarily because they are abstract and their specific meaning is thus ambiguous. Special pains have therefore been taken to understand their iconographic function apart from that as mere decoration and to consider them as far as possible within the conceptual context of the structure and of Umayyad and Sasanian art in general. In this way we hope to avoid the projection of notions that would have been foreign to the period.

The motif closest to the one previously analyzed is a half-flower or half-rosette consisting of four heart-shaped petals, separated by sharply pointed cone-shaped sepals. Although such flowers have had a long history in Greater Syria[2] and have also been observed in the Dome of the Rock and Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi,[3] the placement of this one in a focal point may have served more than a merely decorative purpose. Confirmation can be found in the conspicuous use on the bath hall porch of a related type of flower (with only six petals and no sepals but still a rosette); it is right beneath the feet of the caliph and between the two addorsed royal lions (Fig. 75). A four-petaled form appears as an interstitial pattern in the senmurv panel in the "Palace" compound of the same building (Fig. I). Both motifs have undeniable Sasanian iconographic connections, and in addition the senmurv has clear royal associations; it appears in roundels with rosettes as interstitial patterns in the design on Khosrow II's garment in the grotto of Taq-i Bustan (Fig. 76); two forms of the rosette (without the beast) are also found on the clothing of the royal attendants there.[4] In addition, four-petaled rosettes occur as the sole

Miss Barbara Schmitz kindly drew my attention to the occurrence of this fruit in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock.

[1] Often reproduced, see, for instance, Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis. I. Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions.* Chicago, 1953, pls. 27-49; Gerold Walser, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis.* Berlin, 1966; Donald N. Wilber, *Persepolis, The Archaeology of Parsa, Seat of the Persian Kings.* New York, 1969, figs. on pp. 19-22, 26-28.

For some time another explanation suggested itself to the author, namely that the mosaic represents the *lulab* and *ethrog*, the garnished palm branch and citrus fruit used ritually in the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles (Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period.* New York, 1953, Vol. III, figs. 575, 576, 602, 639, 689-692, 877, 878). This seemed to be supported by the fact that writing exercises with Hebrew letters scribbled on discarded slabs of stone proved the presence of Jewish workmen at the site (Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pl. CXIV, 1 and 2). However, the so-called lulab is too small in relation to the ethrog and is not shown with the usual other branches, quite apart from the fact that it really looks more like a knife. The presence of the mosaic in the front of the throne of a very high Muslim dignitary makes it most unlikely that a Jewish symbol was applied at this spot. It is, however, not impossible that the fruit is an ethrog, only here not shown with Jewish religious connotations, but as an agricultural product.

[2] Florence E. Day, "The Ṭirāz Silk of Marwān," *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld*, pp. 39-61.

[3] Day, *op. cit.*, figs. 8 and 9; van Berchem, *op. cit.*, figs. 327-331.

[4] Elsie Holmes Peck, "The Representation of Costumes in the Reliefs of Taq-i-Bustan," *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 31, 1969, pls. IXb-XI, XIII, XVII, XIX. The fact that we find here two different alternating types of rosettes indicates that the concept of a rosette as such was the main issue and not the individual execution of the emblem.

Fig. I. Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palace. Painting of Senmurvs and Rosettes (After Oleg Grabar in Hamilton, drawing by G. U. Spencer Corbett).

decorative motif on the red and white glass disks encircling the carved rock-crystal medallion of Khosrow I on the famous gold "Cup of Solomon" in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Fig. 50). Even more important, the same type of flower is the main motif of a silk (Fig. 77) made, according to its inscription, in Tunisia (Ifriqiyya) for the Umayyad Caliph Marwan (though it is still uncertain whether it was for the first caliph of that name, 684-685, or the

second, 744-749). Finally, the royal horseman with a tall qalansuwa on the (probably) Umayyad silk in the Wolvinius Altar in Milan wears a four-petaled flower (without sepals) on his tunic right over his heart and another over his right knee (Fig. 69). The motif with all its implications passed on into late Sogdian art as a floral figure of this nature is seen jutting out from under the carpet on which the feasting king on a well-known silver plate—possibly of the ninth century—is sitting (Fig. 78). The fact that there is no functional reason for its curious use in this instance gives further support for the belief that the rosette must have had a royal connotation in Umayyad times, just as it did before and afterwards.

We can go even one step further. Whereas the full-fledged design with senmurvs and rosettes (associated with Khosrow II in Taq-i Bustan) does occur in a wall painting in the more intimate milieu of the Palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar, the animal is omitted in the more formal and public setting of the Throne Apse of the Great Audience hall.[1] The same underlying restrictive attitude is apparent in the official silk fabric of Marwan. The elevation of secondary, nonfigural Sasanian designs to the rank of sole (or major) motifs on early Islamic objects can be regarded as a general rule.

Commonplace as a rosette design might seem, it nevertheless appears to have had royal (and possibly divine) associations which existed already in the Achaemenian period. A rosette occurs as the only ornament on the tomb of Cyrus the Great (just below the gable of the roof) where it certainly must have had a specific significance; rosettes are to be found in great abundance in the framing borders in Persepolis; and finally they are met with twenty-four times in the field of the "Pazyryk Carpet" in the Hermitage in Leningrad where they are the sole decoration of the area where the king or chieftain for whom this carpet was knotted was seated—in other words, in a location which forms a parallel to the half-rosette in the Throne Apse of Khirbat al-Mafjar; it is also important to note that these rosettes (which occur also in a less prominent position among the borders of the carpet) are presented within a composition which has strong royal connotations thus making this Persian floor cover a product which is much more significant than its simpler and more decorative Assyrian prototype.[2]

At Khirbat al-Mafjar the half-flower forms an ensemble with the large mosaic in the surrounding half-circle (Fig. 64). As we have noted, this mosaic differs totally in design from

[1] The senmurv alone and the small bust of a nude woman appear, however, in what must be regarded as the least accessible part of the big Hall. Carved in stone in the niche head of Exedra III they are found at the far side of the pool and were therefore hardly recognizable. (Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, pp. 152-153, fig. 118, pl. XXIX, 26.

[2] For the decoration below the roof of the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae see David Stronach, "A Circular Symbol on the Tomb of Cyrus," *Iran*, vol. IX, 1971, pp. 155-158, Fig. 2, pls. II and III; for Persepolis, see Schmidt, *op. cit.*, vol. I, *passim*; for the "Pazyryk Carpet" see S. I. Rudenko, *The Culture of the Population of the Upper Altai Region* (in Russian), Moscow-Leningrad, 1953, pls. CXV/VI; R. D. Barnett and W. Watson, "The World's Oldest Persian Carpet...," *The Illustrated London News*, July 11, 1953, pp. 69-71. figs. 2 and 10; R. Ettinghausen, "The Boston Hunting Carpet in Historical Perspective," *Bulletin: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, vol. 69, Nrs. 355-356, 1971, fig. 44.

those of the other apses, which consist of stepped patterns, chevrons, scales, staggered rows of little flowers, and overlapping diamonds, all purely decorative in nature. After having described the design in the Throne Apse (which he places among the "basketry patterns") and having explained the manner of its creation, Hamilton points out that "the design, composed of scales... is articulated by radial lines" and suggests "perhaps a deliberate reflection of the radial lines in the construction of the semidome above."[1] The two motifs—the half-flower and the large-scale design with what seem to be overlapping, petal-like leaves—are therefore morphologically related, both variations on radiating centrifugal patterns. Indeed, the half-flower seems to be the core of the larger design.

Quite apart from the fact of its reflection on a flat surface of the radiating stone courses in the semidome above (Fig. E), this type of pattern—whether abstract or floral in character—also had a specific place in sacred and secular Sasanian imagery. In the scene of the investiture of Ardashir II (379-383) at Taq-i Bustan, Mithras' head is surrounded by a circle of rays, and he stands on flowers with two rows of radiating petals (Fig. 79). We can also note the large epaulettes sometimes worn by the Sasanian kings, as shown on some silver plates, especially that of Shapur III (383-388) in the Hermitage (Fig. 80). As we must imagine that the throne at Khirbat al-Mafjar stood just on the half-flower, the radial apse mosaic must then have appeared as a strong, mysterious force emanating from the royal figure. It may have invoked associations with the sun, as the rayed halo of Mithras at Taq-i Bustan was apparently meant to do, suggesting that the Umayyad lord was a "sun king." Or perhaps—in this particular setting—the radial mosaic can be explained as a rendition of the *hvarnah*, or *farr*, the glory that had radiated from the legitimate kings of Iran and whose manifestations had been transferred to a member of the Umayyad caliphal house.[2]

In summary we can say that Exedra V is *the* Throne Apse. Its structure and decoration provide the proper setting for a royal enthronement and reflect royal aspirations, most of them in the Sasanian tradition, though, as far as the mosaics are concerned, executed in the Classical manner. The semidome, the stone chain with its pendant, official and often royal headgear, the offering of tribute, and the symbols of royal splendor all combine to proclaim the majesty of a new Khosrow of Arab blood. We note, however, that in this whole official ambiance there is no reference to the Muslim religion of the princely lord of the mansion.

It is imperative that we explore the other mosaics and decorative elements in the building with the symbolism of the Throne Apse in mind in order to determine whether they are purely ornamental, as has been believed, or whether further royal associations can be found among them. The obvious place to begin is with the large circular mosaic (No. 17 in Hamilton's chart, Fig. G and Fig. 61), which is to be found strategically placed under the central

[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

[2] Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, pp. 64-65. For a parallel see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti-Lever du Roi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 17, 1963, pp. 119-177 to which Professor M. Barasch has kindly redrawn my attention.

dome midway between throne exedra and monumental porch in the axial nave. It rivals, if it does not surpass, in coloring, fine articulation, and size all the various pre-Islamic parallels that can be cited.[1] It draws immediate attention to itself, for its diameter is greater than the width of the nave and it thus penetrates the two flanking aisles. Finally, it consists of a strong, radiating rosette pattern of overlapping petals, closely related to that of the Throne Apse. It may, of course, have been intended merely as a decorative centerpiece, to reflect in its size and artistic quality the dome above it, the apex of the whole large, resplendent structure. Even if this function was the main consideration in its placement and exceptional workmanship, its character and setting show deliberate choice by the supervising architect; this artistic awareness becomes particularly clear when we compare it with similar designs in the pavements in the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs' Church of Gerasa and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. These are simply single units within sets of equally prominent patterns and in no way stressed. Because of the big roundel's relation to the mosaic in the Throne Exedra, however, it is also possible to see in it another, secondary royal station, possibly for certain spectacles in which a more central position for the royal seat was warranted.

Of the other mosaic panels, three stand out because of their unusual size: panels 1 and 25 just inside the entrance to the building from the porch and panel 3 directly in front of the Throne Apse and leading to the side entrance from the palace in the southwest corner and to the Diwan in the northwest corner (Fig. G and Figs. 81-83). These three compositions—and only these three—are distinguished by large numbers of eight-petaled flowers at the focal points of their designs, that is, by inclusion of the same flower that occurs in the Throne Apse, most likely right under the throne. They may therefore very well have marked significant stations in the ceremonial approach to the throne in royal audiences—those near the porch as a stage where one was first exposed to the exalted view of the enthroned prince in Exedra V and then one in front of the throne itself, on the mosaic carpet covering the passage to the palace and to the special audience room.

Rosettes—like the ubiquitous fleur-de-lis in French royal art—are also to be found in other parts of the decoration, where they may also have been intended as heraldic symbols. They are carved in stone and plaster, or they are painted.[2] Particularly important is their repetition on the entrance porch,[3] where, as we have already noted, the caliphal statue standing above two lions, originally flanked by two retainers, and the crenellations associated with Sasanian crowns and palaces (Fig. J)[4] also demonstrate the quintessential qualities of royal Sasanian symbols.

[1] Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*. New Haven, 1938, pl. LXXVIII; E. T. Richmond, "Basilica of the Nativity. Discovery of an Earlier Church," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, vol. 5, 1936, pl. XLIV.

[2] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, figs. 34, 36a, 44, 52, 86, 116, 120, 125, 126a-i, 128, 133a-c, 135, 137, 149, 172, 177, 182, 191, 194-198, 200, 201, 206-212, 225, 241, 246, 248, 251, 253, 254, 256.

[3] *Loc. cit.*, fig. 52.

[4] Oscar Reuther, "Sasanian Architecture," *A Survey of Persian Art*, ed. A. U. Pope. London-New York, 1938-1939, vol. 1, p. 523, fig. 145.

Our growing awareness of these profuse and varied Iranian elements allows us to identify one more Sasanian feature on the porch. As it is of such a startling nature and as we wish to forestall any accusation of having overstepped the bounds of historical probability by having presented exaggerated claims of royal significance in a purely Iranian frame of reference, we shall begin by stressing once more two Iranian characteristics of the period of Hisham. First, not only Khirbat al-Mafjar but also Qasral-Hair al-Gharbi have yielded a great deal of sculpture and decoration in stucco. This medium was unknown in Syria and Palestine before Umayyad

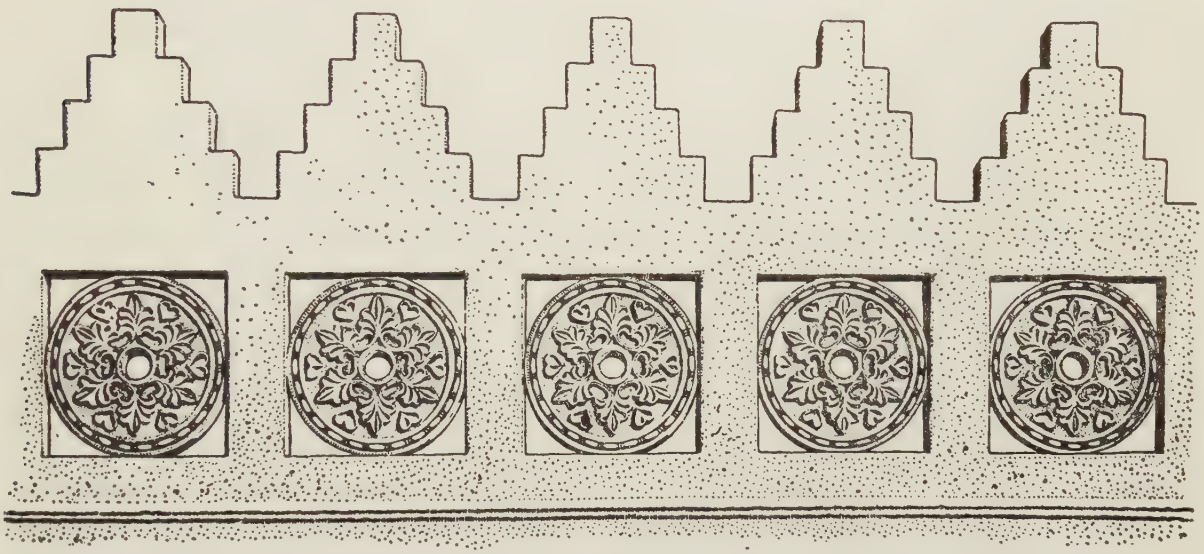

Fig. J. Ctesiphon. Taq-i Kisra: Stepped Crenellations with Frieze of Rosettes below (After Reuther in *A Survey of Persian Art*).

times, but it was common in Sasanian Iraq and Iran, from where the Syrian builders borrowed it, along with the technique and many of its patterns, like birds, feline animals, and various other quadrupeds.[1] Even more significant is the garb of the caliph and his two only rudimentarily preserved retainers on the porch of Mafjar's Throne Hall: they wear the trousered dress of the Iranians. At Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi, the sculptured image of the caliph wears another form of Iranian dress, also with trousers, and a Sasanian type of crown as well.[2] In this iranophil atmosphere one idea must have struck the princely lord of this mansion with special intensity: that of the *hvarnah*, "the royal splendor," by virtue of which the Sasanian kings could legitimately wear the Persian crown and had the right and obligation to impress their subjects with their inherent and supreme majesty. Whether Khirbat al-Mafjar was built for the fourth son of Abd al-Malik, Hisham who had seen three brothers ascend the caliphal throne

[1] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157, 239.

[2] Schlumberger, "Les Fouilles de Qasr el-Heir el-Gharbi...," pl. XLVI, 1.

before him and still another caliph, Umar ibn ʿAbd al-Aziz,[1] or whether (as seems more likely) it belonged to the long-time heir apparent Walid ibn Yazid, it must have given its owner great personal satisfaction to uphold the doctrine of the divine right of kings, with its assurances of succession and legitimate royal claim. Even more satisfying must have been the opportunity to express one's title and privilege at a very conspicuous place and within the framework of all the other official trappings of royalty.

On this premise we refer to an account in the Pahlavi book of *Karnamak-i Artakhshatr-i Papakan*, composed about A.D. 600, which mentions another transfer of the divine *hvarnah* from one dynasty to another. It deals with the flight of Ardashir from Ardavan's court, together with a beautiful and wise maiden, called Gulnar by Ferdowsi:

> Thereupon Ardawan equipped an army of 4,000 men and took the road towards Pars after Artakhshir. When it was mid-day he came to a place by which the road to Pars passed, and asked, "At what time did those two riders whose faces were set in this direction pass by here?" Then said the people, "Early in the morning, when the sun rose, they passed by swiftly... and a very large ram ran after them, than which a finer could not be found. We know that already ere now he will have put behind him a distance of many parasangs, and that it will be impossible for you to catch him." So Ardawan tarried not there, but hastened on. When he came to another place, he asked the people, "When did those two riders pass by?" They answered, "To-day at noon did they go by... and a ram ran after them." Then Ardawan was astonished and said, "Consider: the two riders we know, but what can that ram be?" Then he asked the Dastur (priest), who replied, "That is the Kingly Splendour...; it hath not yet overtaken him, but we must make haste; it is possible that we may catch them before it overtakes them." Then Ardawan hastened on with his horsemen. On the second day they had put behind them seventy parasangs: then a caravan met them. Ardawan asked the people, "In what place did you meet those two riders?" They replied, "Between you and them is still a distance of twenty parasangs. We noticed that beside one of those riders a very large and mighty ram sat on the horse." Ardawan asked the Dastur, "What signifies this ram which is beside him on the horse?" He answered, "May'st thou live for ever! The Royal Splendour [*khurrak-i-Kayan*, the *hvarnah* of the Avesta, and Ferdowsi's *farr-i-kayani*] hath overtaken Ardashir; in no wise can we now take them captive. Therefore weary not yourself and your horsemen more, nor further tire the horses, lest they succumb. Seek in some other way to prevail against Artakhshir." When Ardawan heard this, he turned back and betook himself again to his home.[2]

[1] F. Gabrieli, "Hishām," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second edition. Leyden-London, 1967, vol. 3, p. 494.

[2] E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*. Cambridge, 1929, vol. 1, p. 143.

This myth of the ram as the embodiment of the hvarnah was still alive in Ferdowsi's time, and he gives a similar account of Ardashir's flight. Let us quote only the passage in which the king asks about the two fugitives and receives an interpretation of the answer from his counselor:

> Answered one, "Yea, hard by on the road here,
> Forth to the plain fared two with their horses,
> And at the horses' heels galloped a wild sheep *(ghorm-i pāk)*,
> Which, like the horses, hurled dust-clouds behind it.
>
> Then quoth King Ardawan to his adviser,
> "What was this mountain-sheep *(ghorm-i bārī)* which ran behind them?"
> Answered the other, "That Royal Splendour *(farr)*
> Which, by his lucky star *(nīk-akhtarī)*, leads him to kingship *(shāhī)*."[1]

With this lore in mind let us now look once more at the porch that leads to the splendid audience hall. Indeed we find not only the caliph at the highest point but also on each side of the panel "a row of bearded rams or ibexes," the same type of "ram" that so often appears in Sasanian art, on silver plates (Fig. 84), silks, and stuccoes (Fig. 85), and that is here obviously meant to stand as a symbol of the hvarnah. Hamilton sensed this point:

> ...the presence and prominence of the statues, of the lion pedestal and of the ibexes (actually, they are mountain sheep), both attributes of royalty and both implying it would seem, an owner of princely rank, are factors of direct consequence for the historical interpretation of the building.[2]

Of course, on a more immediate level these animals did suggest the royal hunt, a theme often depicted on Sasanian silver plates. On an even less profound level they must have been regarded as mere decoration. For the onlooker who understood the meanings of the caliph in Persian dress and the suspended qalansuwa, however, this additional allusion to divine kingship must have been perfectly clear.

These rams appear once again, more ambiguously, at the bottom of the drum on which the dome of the porch rests. There they are combined with the effigies of athletes and female dancers, allusions both to royal aspirations and to royal pastimes. The theme of the hvarnah is thus strongly stated both outside and inside the porch, to be echoed by other related symbols inside the main part of the building.

The strong royal associations of the Main Hall and its porch dictate renewed examination

[1] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 144-145; see also *The Shâhnáma of Firdausí*, tr. A. G. Warner and E. Warner. London, 1912, vol. 6, pp. 220-223; the *Burhān-i Qāṭi'* (Tehran, 1332-33, vol. 3, p. 1406) explains *ghorm* as *mīsh-i kūhī* or *gūsfand-i mādeh-yi kūhī*, that is a female mountain sheep (ewe) or mouflon. The adjective "bārī" in the second use of *ghorm* means "royal."

[2] Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar*, p. 102.

of the small side room in the northwest corner, called the Diwan. It was apparently used for private audiences, so that the combination of a large official Throne Hall and a small, more intimate diwan corresponds already to the *divan-i 'amm* and *divan–i khass* of later Persian and Mughal palaces (the general and special audience halls).

The best starting point is the mosaic floor in its apse, which Hamilton had already in 1950 characterized as "unique amongst Palestinian floors both in subject matter and in artistic perfection." It shows a large apple or quince tree; to its left are two gazelles eating leaves, and on the right a ferocious lion has just leaped onto the back of a third gazelle, which tries frantically but unsuccessfully to escape (Fig. 58). Again we must ask ourselves whether or not there is a particular significance in this theme. Scenes with peaceful animals and attacks by ferocious beasts were, of course, common in Roman and Byzantine mosaics. They occur, for instance, in the mosaics of the Great Palace in Constantinople, now attributed to the third quarter of the sixth century,[1] and in those at Antioch.[2] The motif originated, however, in the ancient Near East; in particular, the theme of the lion killing a weaker animal had been current there for millennia, apparently with royal connotations. These connotations are apparent, for instance, on the embroidered tunic of Ashurnasirpal II,[3] on the shield of Sargon II,[4] and among the reliefs at Persepolis.[5] The theme continued in use for many more centuries and occurs, in the form of a lion killing a bull, on a Sasanian silver plate within a larger zoological series that has obvious royal connotations.[6] Later a lion killing a camel appeared on the formal robe made for King Roger II by Arab artisans in Palermo in 1133-1134,[7] and a similar rendering occurred as late as 1578 on the seal of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Qara Oweis Pasha.[8]

This long history poses the question whether the representation at Khirbat al-Mafjar should be considered primarily a genre subject or one with symbolic meaning. As it is the only figural mosaic in the audience hall complex and the only large figural mosaic in the whole compound and as, furthermore, it paves the raised dais where the lord of the mansion would have been seated, it seems more than likely (in view of all the other royal symbolism employed in the building and, particularly, in the main Throne Apse) that this design had special significance too. This significance becomes all the more apparent when we recall that the stucco

[1] Gerard Brett et al., *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, Being a First Report on Excavations Carried out in Istanbul...*, London, 1947, pls. 33, 38, 41, 42.

[2] Doro Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*. Princeton-London, 1947, vol. 1, p. 358, fig. 147, vol. 2, pl. 174b.

[3] A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Niniveh*. London, 1849-1853, vol. 1, pl. 9; T. A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art*. London, 1970, pl. XLII.

[4] Edith Porada, "An Assyrian Bronze Disc," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, vol. 48, February, 1950, No. 271, pp. 2-8.

[5] Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, pl. 20; Wilber, *Persepolis*, fig. 25. About the whole problem: Willy Hartner and Richard Ettinghausen, "The Conquering Lion, the Life Cycle of a Symbol," *Oriens*, vol. 17, 1964, pp. 161-171.

[6] Orbeli et Trever, *Orfèvrerie sasanide*, pls. 26, 30.

[7] Often illustrated; good reproduction in black and white and color (detail) in Hermann Fillitz, *Die Insignien und Kleinodien des Heiligen Römischen Reiches*. Wien-München, 1954, figs. 23, 24.

[8] Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Abhandlungen über die Siegel der Araber, Perser und Türken*. (Wien, n.d.), p. 35 (datable: 1578-1580).

sculpture of the so-called caliph, placed conspicuously within the ceremonial gateway to this very hall stands on a base guarded by two lions, indicating the lion's close association with the concept of supreme power. Beyond its decorative qualities, then, the apse mosaic in the Diwan also had a specific function: to demonstrate symbolically the irresistible power of the caliph, an Oriental theme expressed in the artistic language of the West. We may add that in the Persian-style silk in the Berlin Kunstgewerbemuseum, to which we have already referred (Fig. 47), the theme of a lion killing a gazelle appears twice on each side among the lions that form part of the main scene of the royal hunt; there must have been a specific reason for the inclusion of this particular motif. On the other hand, the unperturbed attitude of the two gazelles on the left hand side of the mosaic at Khirbat al-Mafjar suggests the reign of peace in the caliph's realm, a parallel to the zoological expression of a messianic theme in the mosaics of Antioch and elsewhere.[1] We thus find the polarity of the Islamic world view expressed in pictorial terms: the *Dar al-Islam* versus the *Dar al-Harb*, "the Abode (or Realm) of Islam" versus "the Abode of War."

Further internal proof that such an interpretation must have been intended is provided by the placement of the two animal scenes to the right and left of the person who sat in the apse. The implication is that the right represents a good and blessed condition, whereas the left has connotations of evil and damnation. Literary evidence for this suggestion is provided by the Gospel of St. Matthew (25: 31-46), which reflects local Palestinian lore drawn from a pastoral milieu:

> When the son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... then shall he say also on to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels... and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.[2]

This parable of placing the good on the right and the bad on the left eventually found its proper pictorial realization. It suffices to mention just two cogent comparisons. The earlier, more telling example occurs on the cover of a late third century sarcaphogus in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 86). In a landscape indicated by trees Christ turns to the sheep and goes so far as to place his right hand upon the head of the first animal, thus indicating his approval and acceptance of the evenly and peacefully rendered group. But his raised left hand strongly

[1] Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, vol. 1, pp. 318-319, vol. 2, pl. 72.

[2] Consider also the phrase: "Sedet ad dexteram Patris" in the *Gloria* and *Credo* of the Mass.

implies rejection, as the first goat understands clearly; it shies back as the other more unevenly placed animals lower their heads in defiance.[1] A briefer, more formalized version of this theme is found in a mosaic at S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (first half of the sixth century), but there color symbolism further underlines the lesson of the story. The sheep on the left have bright, white fur, and they are accompanied by a good angel whose red body suggests light; the gray goats with black spots stand before a demonic figure in a dark blue color. Christ motions to the sheep on his right, but his left arm is hidden under his garment, thus expressing his lack of interest in the animals on the left.[2] This basic arrangement of good and bad continued into the Middle Ages, as is indicated by the many scenes in which paradise and the blessed appear on the right of the enthroned Christ while hell and damnation are on his left.[3]

This same arrangement must have been at once clear to any Arab. To this day in his daily life the right hand is the proper, good and clean one, while the left is considered improper and unclean. Right and left are even significant in warding off the evil eye; when Arab boys begin to wear earrings, in order to look like girls, only the right lobe is pierced, for the left is associated with bad luck.[4]

The apse mosaic is, however, not the only piece of decoration in the Diwan that allows conceptual interpretation. In the reconstruction of the domed area just before the apse we find roundels containing winged horses applied to the four pendentives (Fig. D). As already noted (p. 14), in Sasanian and post-Sasanian art the winged horse represented the mount of the king and the vehicle of ascension, implying semi-divinity (Figs. 40-43, 47-50 and 52,). That such an idea was clearly intended is shown by the circle of birds just above the winged horses; though they seem to be only slow, low-flying partridges, they nevertheless stand here as in the arch above the painting of the enthroned prince at Qusayr ʿAmra[5] for the heavens. The ultimate goal of the heavenly journey is demonstrated by yet another most unusual motif: six handsome human heads—those of young men and young women—alternately spaced between luscious acanthus leaves and surrounded by two bands of large-scale vegetal elements (Fig. 87). They occur at the apex of the dome, the usual place of the *oculus*, which in the symbolic cupola paintings of the late Classical and later times indicates the "great beyond" or the domain of the all-highest divinity.[6] This oculus imagery was appropriated in the Muslim setting, so that the youthful heads and the lush vegetation may well have suggested paradise,

[1] Beat Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends. Studien zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes* (*Wiener byzantinische Studien*, Band III). Wien, 1966, pp. 38-39. I am obliged to Professor Buchthal for having referred me to this publication as well as to the mosaic quoted in the following footnote.

[2] Brenk, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

[3] Professor Marvin Eisenberg kindly drew my attention to this aspect of the problem.

[4] Yedida Stillman, "The Evil Eye in Morocco," *Folklore Research Center Studies*, vol. 1, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 86; see also Martin Plessner, "New and Old Topics Relative to Left and Right," *op. cit.*, p. 107 (English resume) and p. 239-258 (in Hebrew). Plessner points in particular to Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis, XLVIII, 15).

[5] Musil, *Ḳuṣejr ʿAmra*, vol. 2, pl. 15.

[6] Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 27, 1945, pp. 1-27.

the final abode of the blessed and the reward of the faithful, as proclaimed by the Koran. It is difficult to offer specific proof of this hypothesis. All that we can venture is to argue that such an interpretation would have fitted Muslim concepts, quite apart from the apparent general tendency in official Umayyad art to render paradise. The location and specific character of this unusual architectural decoration may very well have expressed this idea. If so, the decorations of the private reception hall would have symbolized both the aspirations for temporal power and the religious hopes of the original owner of the palace.

Before leaving this room we should examine one more composition—and a related one in the main hall—that may carry a meaning, though final judgement on this issue will remain difficult to prove. On the threshold of the Diwan and of the Throne Hall, right behind the Porch, are mosaics whose pattern, unlike those of other units, is set in a diamond-shaped frame and is therefore more eye-catching (Figs. 81 and 88). The design itself represents a knot composition, which may be more than a mere decorative theme, for such motifs were often used to ward off evil forces thought to be particularly dangerous near doorways. Knot designs were therefore frequently applied in these areas and are found even in churches. Examples whose magic function is incontrovertible are especially found in Syria and Palestine, among them being a mosaic panel in Constantine's Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.[1] The apotropaic purpose of certain knot designs was not undermined by their occurrence with other purely decorative panels with knot designs in the same room or ensemble—as happens in the Diwan. As Ernst Kitzinger has noted, we must allow for a whole range of likely meanings, running from precise symbolism through vague associations to the purely ornamental.[2] In view of the location of the panels in the Diwan and Throne Hall, their unusual compositions and the attested existence of local beliefs in the magic power of knot designs, we must conclude that an apotropaic content for these mosaics is quite possible.

As the specific meaning of the most important unit of Khirbat al-Mafjar is now more apparent, we should say a word about the original owner of the palace compound. In spite of the fact that the intended message was one of imperial authority and omnipotence, no real evidence has been found to indicate that the palace was built for the Caliph Hisham himself, rather than by his nephew and eventual successor Walid ibn Yazid, as Hamilton assumed. We find similar imperial pretensions in the Throne Hall of Qusayr 'Amra—especially in the images of the enthroned ruler and the six kings; yet, as Sauvaget has shown,[3] the inscription above the imperial throne does not refer to a caliph. In this connection it may not be accidental that the statue of the caliph on the outside of the porch at Khirbat al-Mafjr—unlike the one at Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi (which is much more definitely associated with Hisham)—wears no

[1] Kitzinger, "The Threshold of the Holy Shrine...," pp. 641-642, fig. 3.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 643-644.

[3] J. Sauvaget, "Remarques sur les monuments omeyyades I: châteaux de Syrie," *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 231, 1939, pp. 14-15; Oleg Grabar, "The Paintings of the Six Kings at Qusayr 'Amrah," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 1, 1954, p. 187.

crown. As Walid was about thirty-five years old in February 743 when he became caliph (a position that he held only a little more than a year, until April 744) and as he must have been at least in his twenties before he could build such an ambitious structure, we arrive at a date

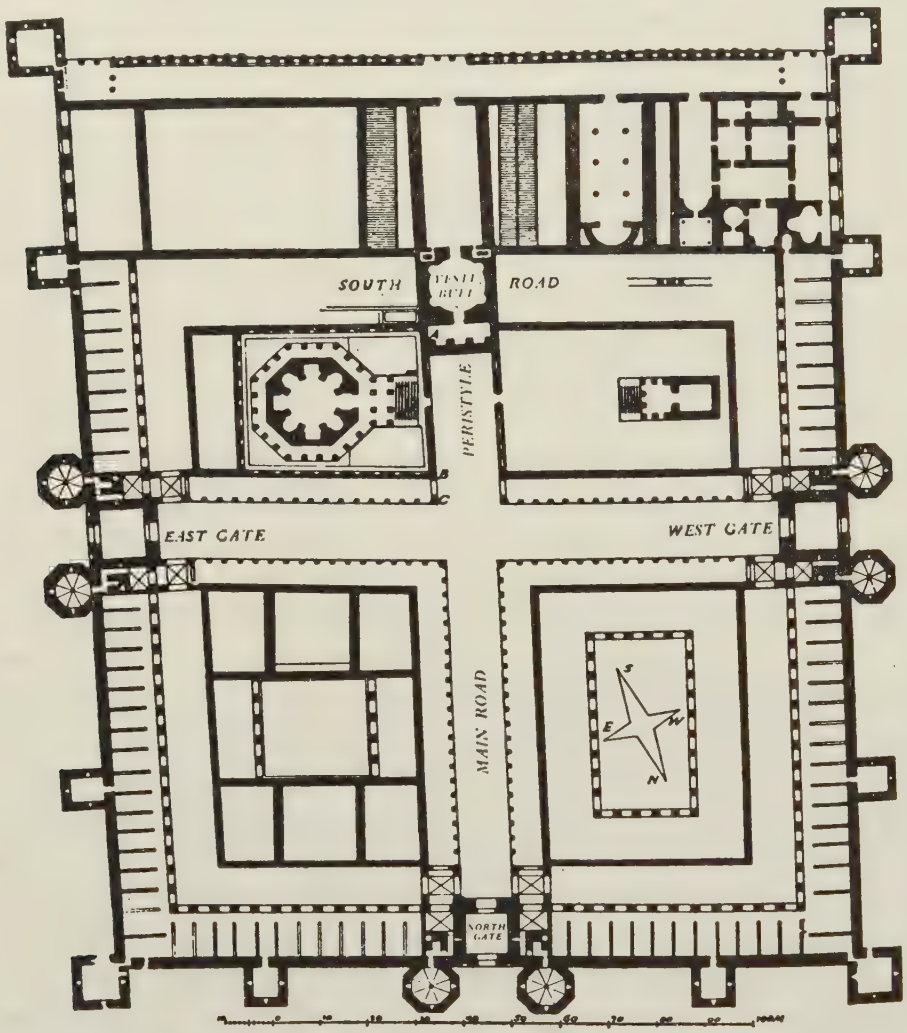

Fig. K. Spalato, Diocletian's Palace, with Large Audience Hall, Small Reception Room and Bath in the Southwest Corner. About A.D. 300 (After Kähler).

of about 730-743 for Khirbat al-Mafjar. Indeed the whole setting (though it has now been proven to be less bizarre and frivolous than was previously believed), the peculiar feature of the long, narrow plunge pool (represented in effigy in a fresco of Qusayr ʿAmra)[1] and various other artistic elements all point to the libertine Walid. In a way the many iconographic features

[1] Musil, *Kuṣejr ʿAmra*, vol. 2, pl. XXVI.

of the building that express the original owner's imperial aspirations seem all the more poignant.

At this point consideration of the building itself, apart from its decorations, may further illuminate its historical implications. Especially significant is the fact that the stone chain with the royal headgear is not suspended in a barrel-vaulted eyvan, as was its prototype, the precious crown of the Sasanians, in the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon. In our architectural investiga-

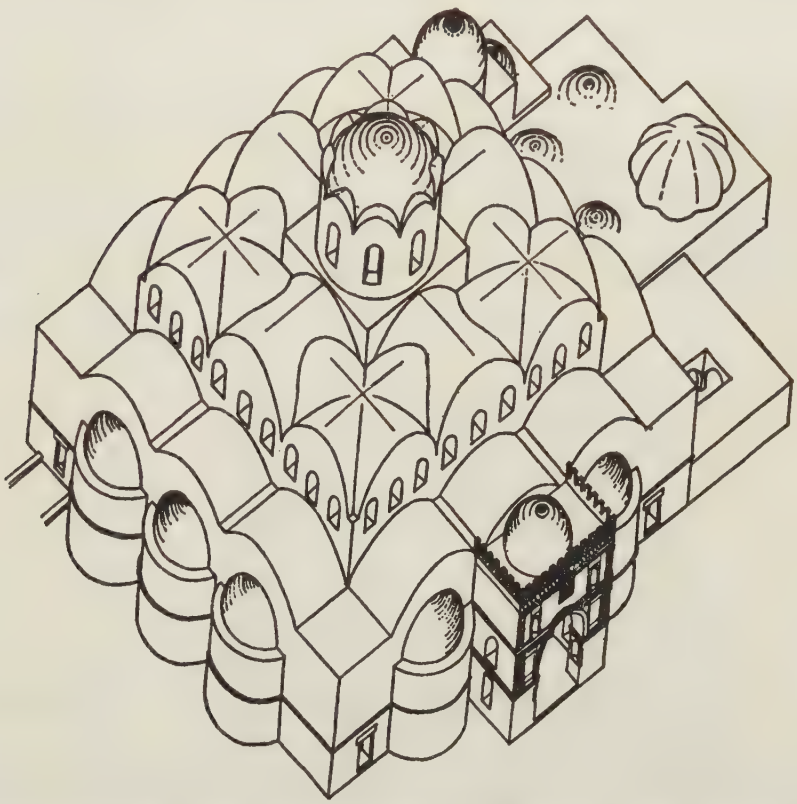

Fig. L. Khirbat al-Mafjar, "Bath Hall," Reconstructed Elevation (After Hamilton in *Levant* I).

tion it seems best to begin with the concept underlying the whole structure, then to focus on the higher core unit, and to end with a special feature thus far not found in other Umayyad monuments—the eleven exedrae and the low ambulatory on which they open.

The idea of combining a large audience hall and a smaller reception room, each with an apse at the end of its longitudinal axis (though in a different alignment) with a third complex, a bath of very limited size next to the reception chamber, had already occurred in Diocletian's Palace at Spalato about A.D. 300 (Fig. K).[1] The basic concept of the Throne Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar therefore goes back to an older Roman prototype.

[1] Frequently illustrated, see for instance, Heinz Kähler, *The Art of Rome and her Empire*. New York, 1965, fig. 44.

The ground plan (Fig. A) of the central group of architectural elements and various views of its elevation, especially a new bird's eye view of the exterior published by Hamilton in 1969 (Figs. F, G and L),[1] make it clear that we are confronted with a "quincunx" structure to which a low, outer ambulatory has been added. The inferences from these facts are considerable. First, the core unit, the quincunx itself, is the same type of structure that had already served as an audience hall for the Ghassanid Pylarch al-Mundhir b. al-Harith b. Jabala (569-582) in Rusafa-Sergiopolis (Fig. M).[2] Walid ibn Yazid (if indeed he was the builder of

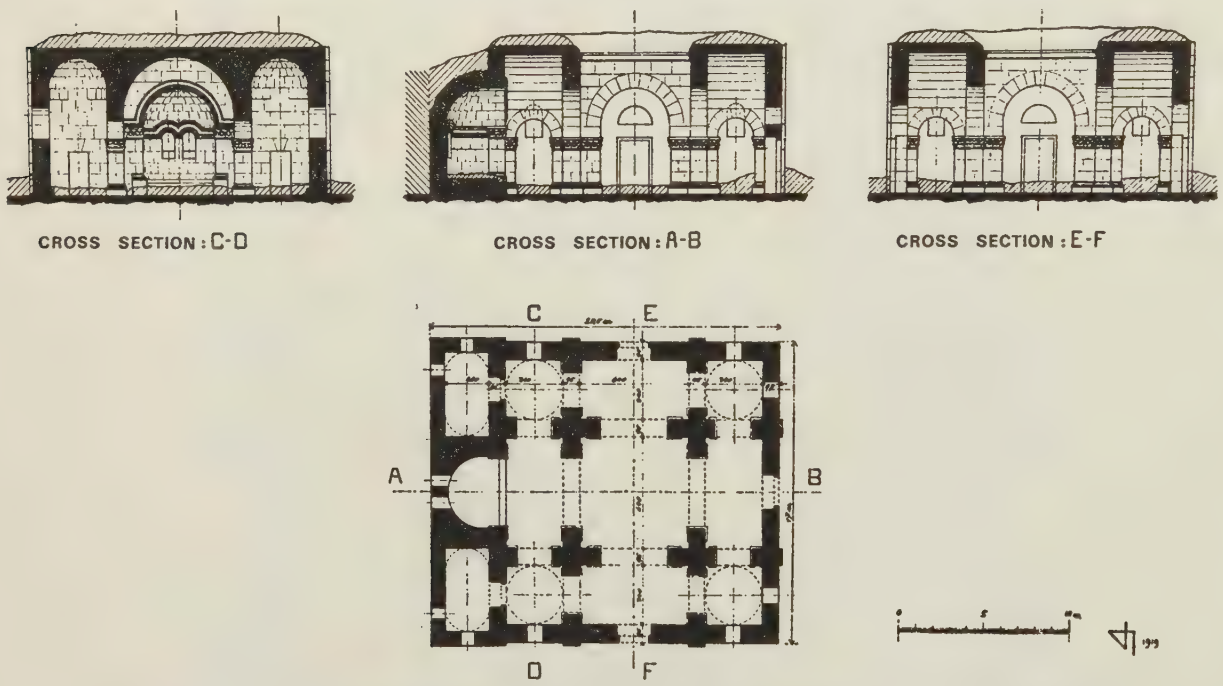

Fig. M. Rusafa-Sergiopolis, Elevation and Plan of the Audience Hall of al-Mundhir (569-582). (After Spanner-Guyer).

Khirbat al-Mafjar) had thus drawn upon an architectural prototype from an earlier Arab ruler of the region, an official ally of the Byzantines, who had naturally been subject to the influence of their artistic conventions. But Walid expanded the original scheme by adding the low ambulatory, the eleven exedrae, and the entrance porch. That the model had been erected in Rusafa has additional significance for our understanding of Khirbat al-Mafjar, for the former, more northern Syrian town was Hisham's residence.

More startling is Khirbat al-Mafjar's relation to Byzantine architecture. It reflects, on the

[1] Hamilton, "Who built...?" fig. 1.

[2] H. Spanner und S. Guyer, *Rusafa*. Berlin, 1926, pp. 42-44, pls. 31-32; J. Sauvaget, "Les Ghassanides et Sergiopolis," *Byzantion*, vol. 14, 1939, pp. 115-120; Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. Hammondsworth, 1965, pp. 188, 232-233, 246, pl. 136 B.

whole, the standard quincunx, or cross-in-square, arrangement of the Middle Byzantine church, a plan in nearly universal use from the tenth century to the fall of Constantinople (Fig. N). For the record, let us repeat its formal description:

> ...Enclosed in the outline of a square its core—the *naos*—is composed of nine elements: a tall center bay, resting on four supports, either columns or piers; a high, well-lit drum of a dome rising as a rule from pendentives; subordinate to it, four short barrel-vaulted

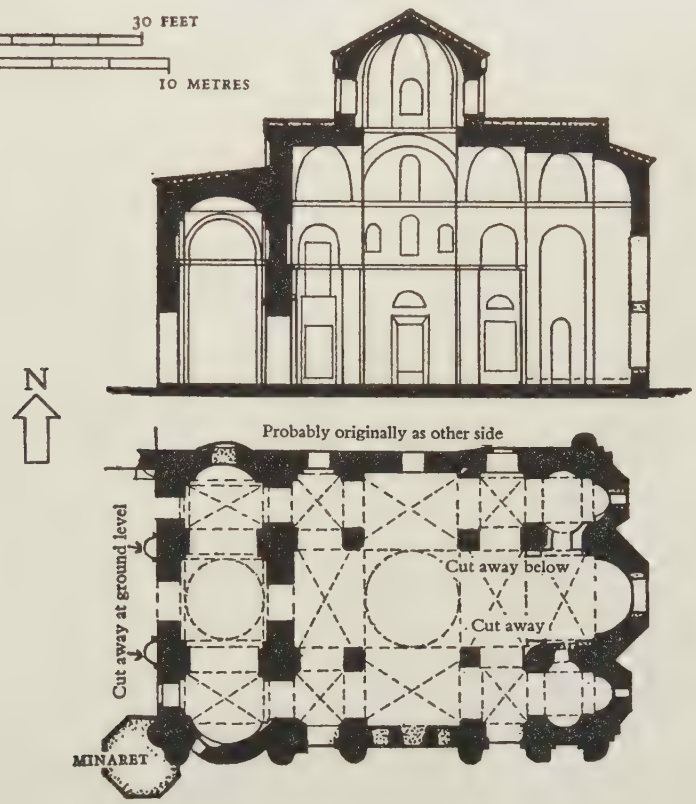

Fig. N. Plan and Elevation of a Quincunx Church with Narthex: Upper Structure of the Myrelaion Church (Budrum Cami) in Constantinople, circa 930 (After Krautheimer).

> cross arms expanding in the main axes; lower in the diagonal axes, four corner bays, groin-vaulted, barrel-vaulted or domed; jointly these corner bays and the taller main dome form the five spots of the quincunx. At the same time, the term "cross-in-square" is justified by the way in which the arms of the cross issue from the center bay and meet the outer square of the structure. Three apses project from the naos. The core is at times enveloped by a narthex, by lateral open porticoes or by closed side chapels (parekklesia).[1]

[1] Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

As Hamilton is convinced of the correctness of his reconstruction,[1] on the basis of careful consideration of his finds, and as in his publications he does not concern himself with this Byzantine aspect of the monument—a connection which otherwise might have influenced his reconstruction of the Throne Hall—we have no reason to question his design. As it now appears, the Throne Hall has indeed the "steep, lithe elevation" that Richard Krautheimer finds so characteristic of the later quincunx churches, and the internal composition is in both cases identical (with the possible exception of the groin-vaulted corner bays, which in Khirbat al-Mafjar were not lower but as high as the intermediary barrel-vaulted bays). The Throne Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar may, therefore, constitute the missing link between al-Mundhir's hall at Rusafa (and the much earlier quincunx structure of A.D. 180 at Musmieh in Syria)[2] and

[1] Upon my inquiry Mr. Hamilton was kind enough to give me the following information about the reconstruction of what was then still called the "Bath Hall" (letter dated April 9th, 1970):

"The reconstruction hazarded in *Levant* I is, in fact, based in all respects but one on the theoretical reconstruction that Corbett and I arrived at, piecemeal, in the book. I think on the whole the essential articulation of the superstructure is reasonably well based on physically extant data.

(1) Was the "ambulatory" lower? Another form of the same question would be: "Did the high walls containing the outer windows (pp. 70-5) really rest on arches connecting the 16 piers and not on the peripheral walls?" We were convinced, in excavation, that the high walls we were finding had in fact fallen from the central square (9 bays) and not from the outer walls. I am not really sure now whether this could be rigorously proved; but I believe if the outer walls had been carried up high enough above the exedra arches to contain windows, we could not have failed to detect this in the way the masonry had fallen. Furthermore, I believe the plan must confirm our interpretation. For if the system of vaulting (outside the central dome) had been carried at a uniform height across the ambulatory to the outer walls, I do not think the relatively low apsidal exedrae would have afforded the necessary abutment. Our reconstruction, on the other hand, with progressively descending vaults, makes the whole thing satisfyingly stable. In a word, to illustrate my point, I could not be persuaded that it would be safe to carry the wall which confronts you in my Plate CVI high enough *above the apses* to contain a row of large windows such as we found. That would be architectural nonsense. It follows, then, that if the high walls containing the windows belonged where I think we found them, to the middle area of the building, they must have looked out *over* the vaults of the ambulatory, for some of them were definitely glazed external windows.

(2) "Were the inner corner elements (cross-) vaulted and the "cross" barrel vaulted"? I cannot prove that (see my pp. 74-75), but have merely chosen it as a logical and simple arrangement barrel-vaults over oblong compartments, cross-vaults over squares. Further, it amuses me to imagine that the cruciform arrangement of mosaic floors vertically below those corners reflected a crossvault above, but that, I admit, is no more than a private fancy.

The detail in which my *Levant* reconstruction of the bath differs from that in the book is in the central dome. I am now convinced that the three pendentives of which we found remains (pp. 79-81) must have been the survivors of eight, not just four. A reconstruction with eight lunettes biting into the lower part of the dome fits the facts better, I now believe, than the four suggested in figure 36. As usual we have only a small fraction of the original fabric to work from. The survival of as many as three bits of pendentives argues the existence of more than four originally, if the survival rate of other features is typical. Just one stone, for example, of figure 36a (p. 77, presumably from the substructure of the dome); just one, too, of figure 47—but what a lot it says."

[2] Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 246, pl. 136 A.

the later church plans, of which the earliest, S. Maria delle Cinque Torri at San Germano near Cassino, dates to 778-797, and the next to the ninth century. It seems significant that all three of the earliest quincunx buildings are in Syria or Palestine and that two, and possibly all three, had the same secular character. How this type was then converted into a church plan is still an unsolved problem which does not concern us here. In any case, it seems to present a curious parallel to the earlier adoption of the secular basilica for ecclesiastical purposes.

More than has been recognized so far, Khirbat al-Mafjar contributes to our general understanding of early Muslim architecture. Let us first consider the earliest preserved congregational mosque, the Great Mosque of al-Walid I in Damascus, constructed in 705-715 (Fig. O). It is the only early hypostyle mosque whose wider axial nave was built with a dome in its *center*; even though the present dome dates only from 1082, there was an earlier, possibly wooden, dome at the same spot in al-Walid's time.[1] The mosque thus has, despite the broad, rectangular orientation of its sanctuary, a centralizing feature, in the form of a dome. In this respect its main parallel is the Throne Hall at Khirbat al-Mafjar, though the feature is prefigured in al-Mundhir's hall at Rusafa (and also in the audience hall of Kharaneh).[2] There are, furthermore, three mihrabs in the same mosque, of which the one at the end of the central nave is larger than those flanking it, a tripartite feature that is again most unusual for a mosque (though it was later adopted in certain Egyptian mosques modeled after the one in Damascus). Now, as various Arabists have shown, the word "mihrab" in pre-Islamic and early Islamic texts has the primary connotation of "niche as throne recess or princely seat.[3] It thus applies to Exedra V at Khirbat al-Mafjar as well. Do these archaeological and philological considerations not justify the belief, already strongly supported by Sauvaget,[4] that in that early period the mihrab was also a symbol of supreme authority, especially appropriate in the main mosque of the capital?

Such a belief is not contradicted by the fact that in the Mosque of Madina of 706-710 the mihrab marked the place where the Prophet had performed the ritual prayer.[5] This religious association seems to have been purely local, for there is no sign that it was consciously transferred to other mosques. Indeed the mihrab was at first rejected as the least holy place,[6]

[1] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*. Second edition, vol. 1, part. 1, pp. 167-168.

[2] Sauvaget, *La Mosquée omeyyade de Médine*, p. 128, fig. 17.

[3] N. Rhodokanakis, "Zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 25, 1911, pp. 71-78; Josef Horovitz, "Bemerkungen zur Geschichte und Terminologie des islamischen Kultus," *Der Islam*, vol. 16, 1927, pp. 260-263 with references to other earlier investigations. See also Sauvaget, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-149; R. B. Serjeant, "Miḥrāb," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 22, 1959, pp. 439-453 (and Creswell, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 148.)

[4] Sauvaget, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-149.

[5] Sauvaget, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Henri Stern, "Les Origines de l'architecture de la Mosquée omeyyade à l'occasion d'un livre de J. Sauvaget," *Syria*, vol. 28, 1951, p. 272.

[6] C. H. Becker, *Islamstudien*. Leipzig, 1924, vol. 1, p. 439 with all Arabic references. This particular chapter "Zur Geschichte des arabischen Kultus," appeared first in *Der Islam*, vol. 3, 1912, pp. 374-399.

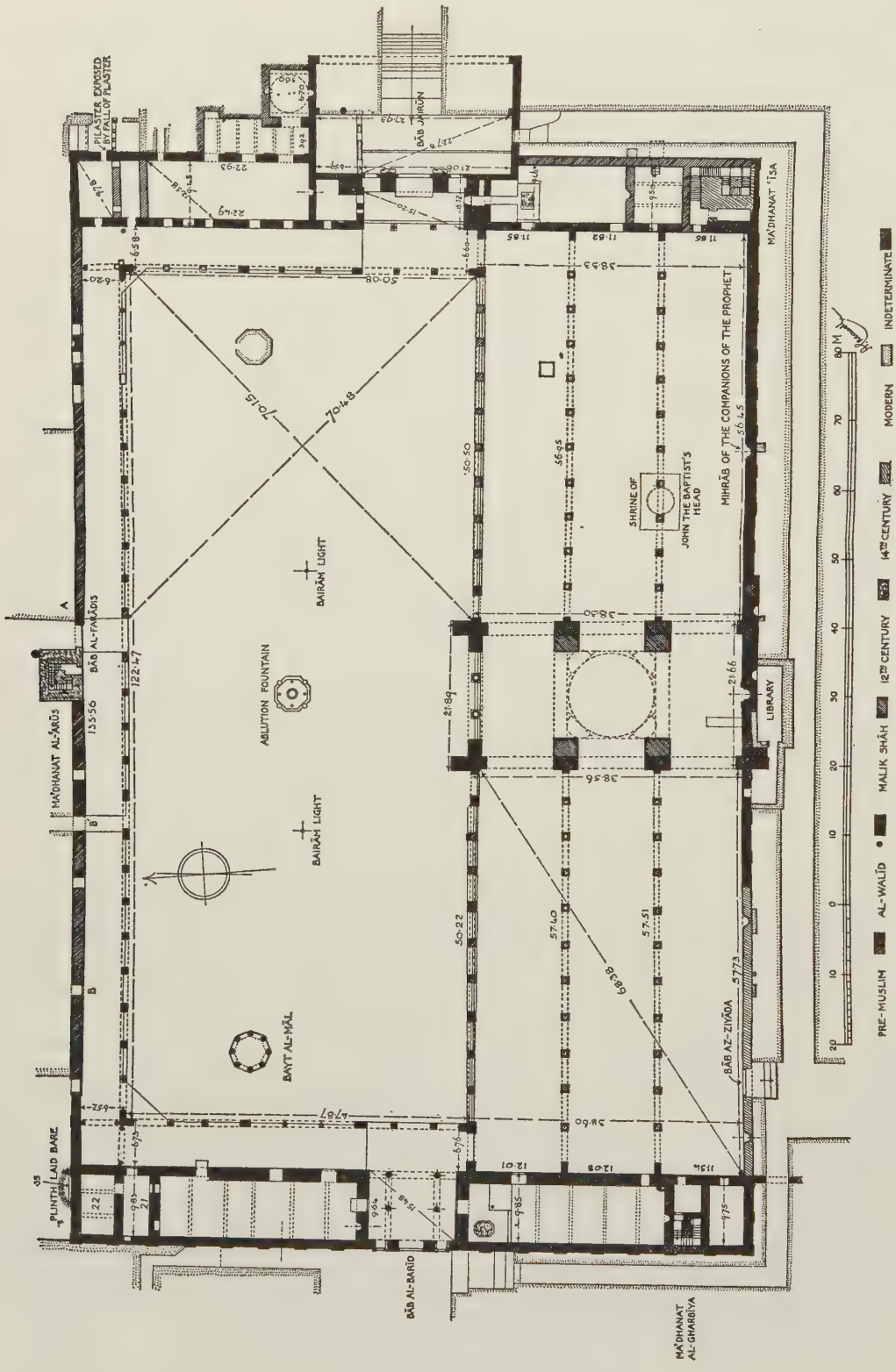

Fig. O. Damascus, Plan of the Great Mosque Built by al-Walid I (705-715) (After Creswell).

a comprehensible reaction to the use in mosques of the mihrab, since it was conceptually connected with a secular ruler, be he pagan (as in Trier and Piazza Armerina) or Muslim (as in the slightly later Khirbat al-Mafjar), and also because of its connection with a church. It would have been less unacceptable had it been widely associated with the Prophet, yet even then the temporal role of the Prophet as the head of the new Muslim state might very well have merged with the secular concept of the throne recess. That our linking of the Mosque of Damascus with a palatial unit (such as the one at Khirbat al-Mafjar) is not far fetched is supported by the fact that the closest parallel to its facade is that of the "Palatium" of Theodoric as depicted in a mosaic of S. Apollinare Nuova.[1]

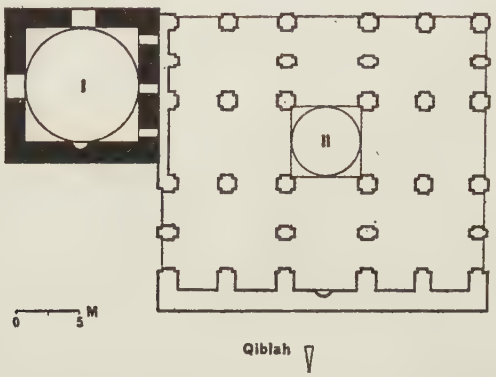

Fig. P. Partial Plan (Reconstruction) of the Shrine-Complex of Turbat-i Shaikh Jam Showing the Domed Funerary or Memorial Mosque of 1236 and the Old Masjid-i Jami' of the First Third of 14th Century (After L. Golombek in *Iran*).

While the Great Mosque of al-Walid in Damascus represents a near contemporary parallel for important aspects of the Throne Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar, this Umayyad building nevertheless also shows pronounced dissimilarities, particularly with regard to its broad rectangular shape which forms such a contrast to the near-square form of the Palestinian structure. This different character may possibly be explained by the fact that the Damascus Mosque represents, so to speak, a cross of the old Byzantine-Arab Throne Hall with a church of the usual *Langhausbau* scheme which has been turned 90 degrees to face Mecca.[2]

There is, however, some evidence that a true "Mafjar type of mosque"—of near square shape, hypostyle structure, with a dome over the wider central aisle and lacking a co-ordinated, developed court—did exist, although we have now only a rather late example in a ruined condition, the Old Masjid-i Jami' of the first third of the fourteenth century found within

[1] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*. Second edition, vol. 1. part 1, fig. 102; see also Ejnar Dyggve, *Ravennatum palatium sacrum*, Copenhagen, 1941.

[2] Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*. Second edition, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 17-22 (with bibliography) and fig. 8.

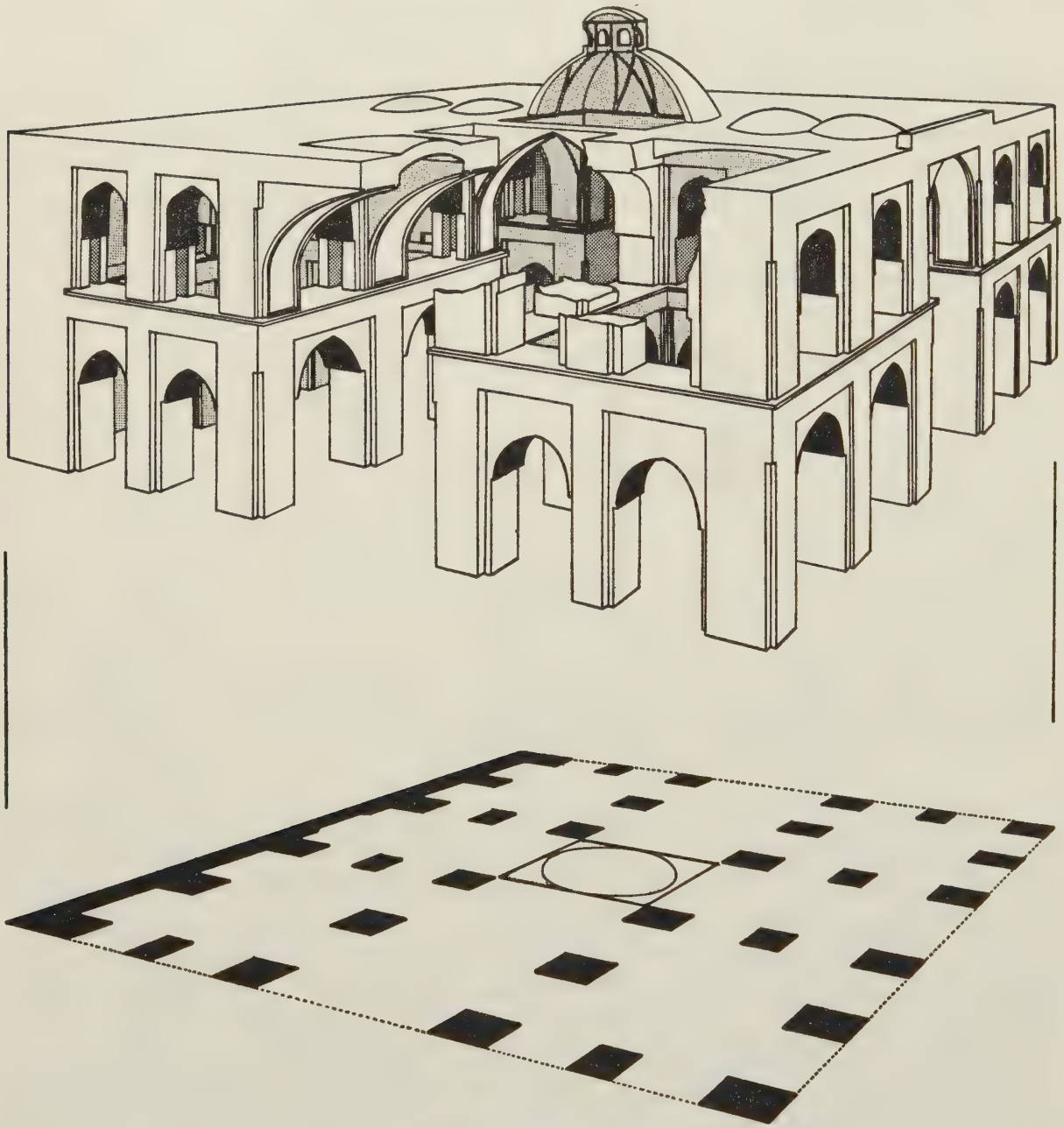

Fig. Q. Reconstruction of Elevation and Plan of the Old Masjid-i Jami' of Turbat-i Shaikh Jam (After L. Golombek in *Iran*).

the Turbat-i Shaikh Jam complex, halfway between Mashhad and Herat (Figs. P and Q). The reconstructions by John McCool of 1938 as published by Donald N. Wilber[1] and the more recent one of Lisa Golombek of 1966[2] both agree on these basic features, so that we are, here, in the far-away conservative setting of a shrine dedicated to a saint, apparently faced with an only slightly modified survival of an early mosque type. But if this is so and we can therefore assume that other such mosques existed in earlier times we are entitled to ask ourselves whether the Anatolian hypostyle mosque of the thirteenth to the fifteenth century with the central element of an "inner court" distinguished by an opening in the roof or covered by a lantern or dome is not possibly a variant in a marginal region of the hypostyle mosque with a central dome, or was at least inspired by it. For the time being we have, however, to be satisfied with having raised this question. We are unable to come to more definite conclusions at this time, as no monuments prior to 1200 are known.

There is still another mosque type—so far unexplained—which may owe its original formation to structures like the Throne Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar. Although the connecting links are still unknown to us, there seems to be a specific relationship between the Audience Hall and the unusual square, nine-bay mosque, of which nine examples, dated from the first half of the ninth century to 1159, have been found in Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Spain and Central Asia (Fig. R).[3] The protoype for this group has so far escaped detection, but could it not be a building on the order of the core unit at Khirbat al-Mafjar (see the indicated core unit in Fig. A)? Certain features have changed, it is true. The bays, which were originally of different sizes, are now of uniform dimensions, the varied roofing has been equalized to nine domes, and there are more exits. The basic elements—the square shape, the nine bays, the arcades on pillars or columns, and the absence of a courtyard—are, however, still present. Even a secondary feature like the triple front entrance occurs occasionally in the mosques, where this feature is equalized in comparison to the more varied Umayyad arrangement. The mysterious

[1] D. N. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran, The Il-Khānid Period*. Princeton, 1955, p. 174, pl. 172, fig. 52.

[2] Lisa Golombek, "A Thirteenth Century Funerary Mosque at Turbat-i-Shaykh Jam," *The Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, Nr. 1, 1969, pp. 13-18, Figs. 1, 3 and 4; *idem*, "The Chronology of Turbat-i Shaikh Jām," *Iran, Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, vol. IX, 1971, pp. 28, 32-34, Figs. 1-3, pl. IV.

The Turbat-i Jam plan actually represents a refinement on the original Mafjar plan. Here the dome has a logical place within the structure as it is placed over the crossing of the wider central aisle leading to the mihrab and the "transept" running across the middle of the hypostyle hall. In this fashion the placing of the dome would be a parallel of the dome over the crossing of the wider central nave and the wider arcade in front of the qibla wall found in the T-shaped mosque.

[3] Golombek, "Abbasid Mosque at Balkh," *Oriental Art*, vol. 15, 1969, pp. 13-16; A. S. Melikian Chirvani, "La plus ancienne mosquée de Balkh," *Arts Asiatiques*, vol. 20, 1969, pp. 3-9; this type eventually recurs in Ottoman architecture (Eski Cami of Edirne, begun 1402 and Mosque of Çelebi Sultan Mehmed of Dimetoka, 1421, or in modified form in the Mosque of Bīyīklī Mehmed Paşa of the early 16th century and even in Sinan's Şehzade Mosque of 1548, both in Istanbul, see A. Kuran, *The Mosque in Early Ottoman Architecture*. Chicago-London, 1968, figs. 220, 221, 233, o and s).

nine-bay mosque type can therefore be regarded as a later, more standardized version of the core unit of Khirbat al-Mafjar.[1]

Finally, there is a genetic connection between a specific architectural feature of Khirbat al-Mafjar and of later buildings. The monumental projecting porch does not occur in mosque architecture until the Great Mosque of Mahdia, built about 916.[2] It may very well have been suggested by the porches of secular structures, though these latter have long since disappeared. Yet that they must have existed is suggested by the Porch of Khirbat al-Mafjar.

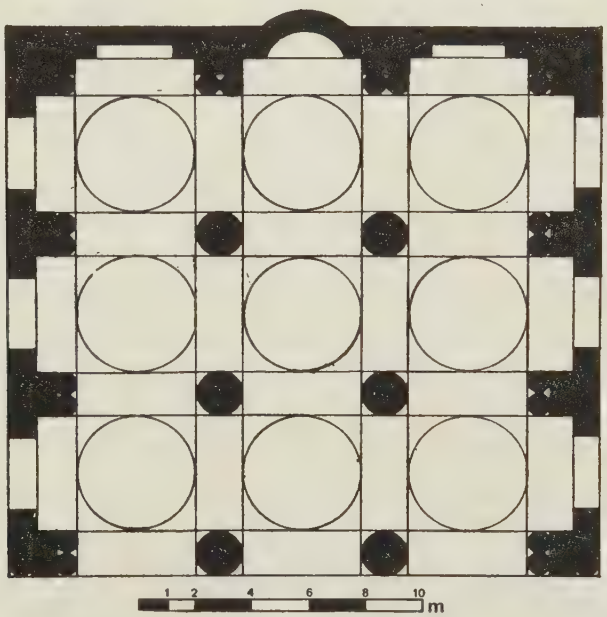

Fig. R. Typical Plan of a Nine-Dome Mosque: Masjd-i Ta'rikh in Balkh, Afghanistan. First Half of Ninth Century (Reconstruction L. Golombek).

Turning now to the outer, enveloping parts of the Throne Hall and its function, we realize once more how complex they must have been. The Byzantine type of ambulatory seems hardly to have served the usual purpose of permitting circulation around the core unit, for the pool on the south side made complete circumambulation impossible. Rather it provided

[1] Examples of nine-bay churches in the Latin West are the Oratory of Germigny-des-Prés of 806 (see K. J. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*. Baltimore, 1959, pp. 16-17,—where the author points to the connection with Musmieh— fig. 2, pls. 4 and 5) and the "Bishop's Chapel" in Hereford of 1079-95 (G. Bandmann, "Die Bischofskapelle in Hereford," *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem*, ed. G. v. d. Osten. Bonn, 1965, pp. 9-26. The nine-bay theme is also to be found in the fifteenth century synagogue of Tomar, Portugal (J. M. Santos Simões, *Tomar ea sua Judaria*. Tomar, 1943, pl. 3).

[2] G. Marçais, *L'Architecture musulmane d'Occident. Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, Espagne, Sicile*. Paris, 1954, p. 106, fig. 64.

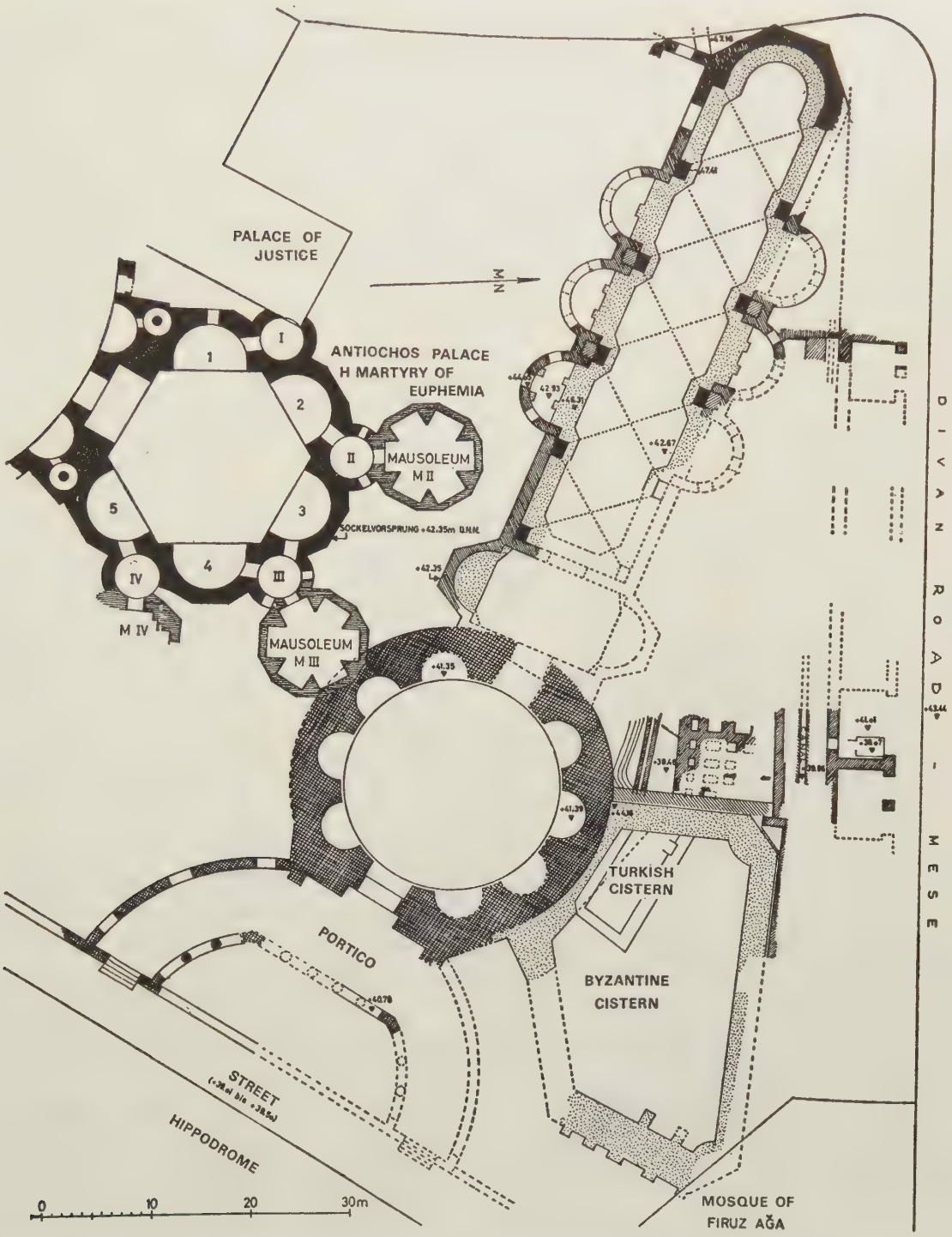

Fig. S. Plan of Palace Compound of Antiochos in Constantinople Showing in the Northeast Corner the Triclinium with the Added Six Apses of the Sixth Century (After Naumann).

access passages from the private palace entrance to the Throne Apse and Diwan and from the Entrance Porch to the Bath and latrines. If our hypothesis that spectacles were held within the Throne Hall and viewed by its lord from a seat on the central mosaic is correct, these passages could also have served for preparations and spectators.

The eleven half-round exedrae, which on three sides project beyond the walls (and on the fourth abut into the masonry of the adjacent Bath) and of which the one opposite the central entrance is larger, suggest an additional function. Wall niches were, of course, a feature of Roman and Byzantine audience halls, but they seem usually to have been concave elements in the walls themselves. Projecting apses occurred in the Imperial thermae, like that in Trier

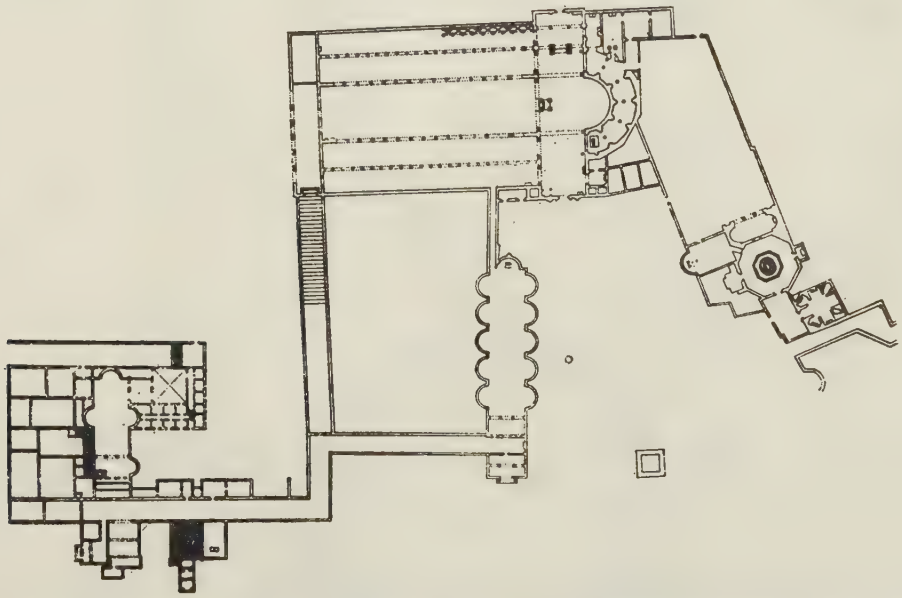

Fig. T. Plan of Lateran Palace with Triclinium before 1588 (After Krautheimer, based on Lauer).

dated about 300 A.D.,[1] but their alignment is different from that at Khirbat al-Mafjar. They also served different functions within the three basic units of the actual bathing compound. The closest Khirbat al-Mafjar approaches to this plan is in the eight apses in Room D, the caldarium. Still, it seems significant that the architectural ensemble of the thermae had such semicircular projections.

There is yet another type of building with protruding though regularly spaced apses in which the central one is more prominent: the Byzantine or late Roman triclinium, which served for state banquets and receptions. The earliest surviving example is a building of the

[1] Kähler, *op. cit.*, fig. 40; M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri*. London, 1970, pp. 98-102, figs. 6 and 9; H. Mylius, *Die römischen Heilthermen von Badenweiler*. Berlin-Leipzig, 1936, fig. 14, pls. 1-2, 9.

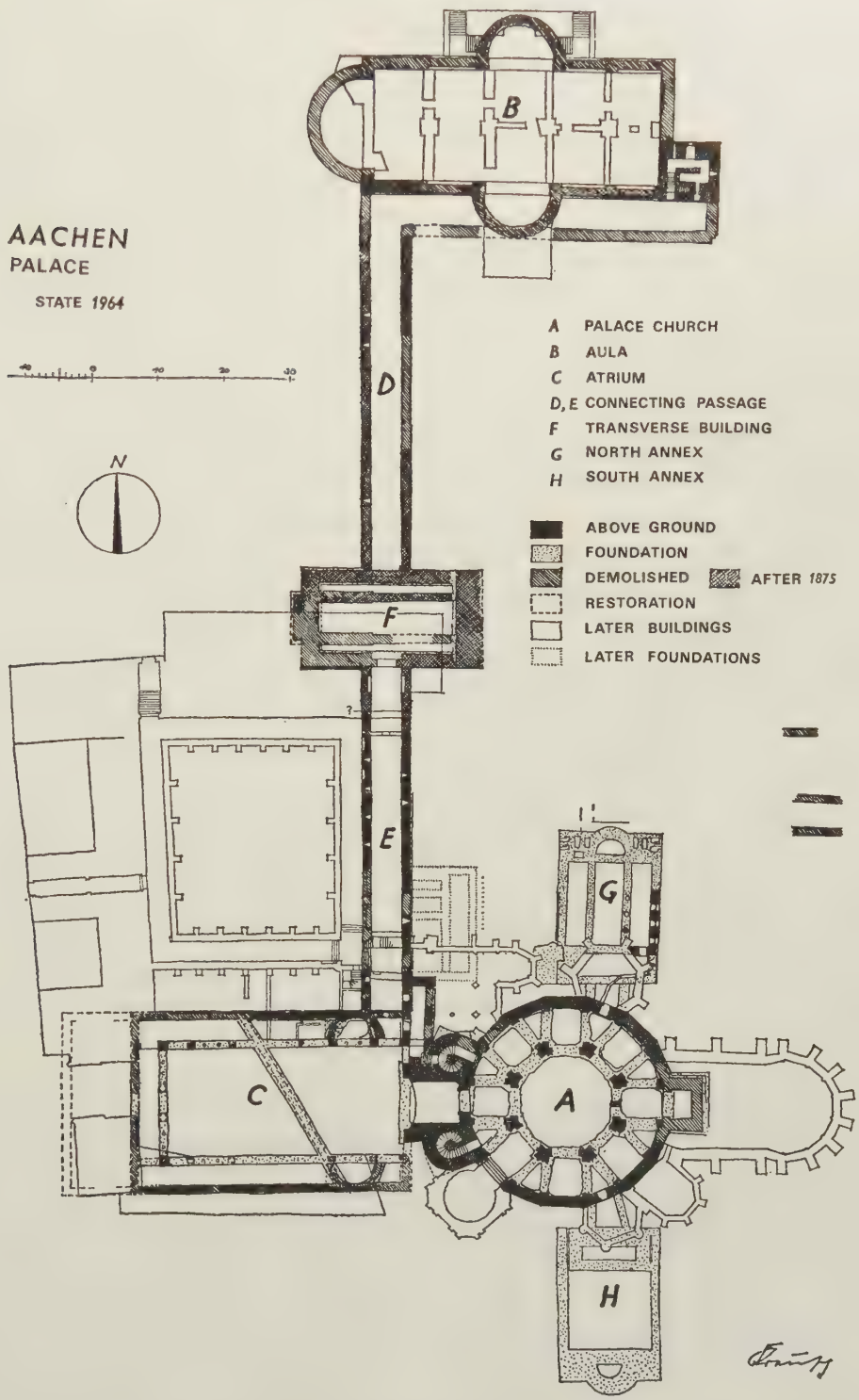

Fig. U. Palace Compound of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) with Throne Hall—Aula Triclinium—in the North (Marked B on Plan; the Inner Cross Walls of the Triclinium are Later Additions) (After Naumann).

early fifth century next to the Palace of Antiochos in Istanbul.[1] Originally this long, narrow structure had only a large central apse at one end, but in the sixth century three protruding apses, or *akkubita* (diwans), were added to each of the long side walls (Fig. S). Of the same type, but a later date, is the triclinium built about 800 by Leo III in the Lateran Palace in Rome (Fig. T); beside the central exedra, it had five projecting apses on each side and, as does Khirbat al-Mafjar, a porch and a passage connecting it to the palace as well.[2] This architectural type recurred, though in a reduced fashion, even in Aix-la-Chapelle, where two single apses flank the throne exedra, and a porch and a passage lead to the palace (Fig. U).[3] The probable prototype of this genus is the *Decanneacubita*, a triclinium of nineteen divans (or of one central and eighteen side exedrae), in the Imperial Palace compound in Istanbul, which, according to Krautheimer, was probably built in the late fourth or early fifth century and possibly even in the period of Constantine.[4] That Khirbat al-Mafjar does not have the long, narrow space typical of the buildings in Istanbul, Rome and Aix-la-Chapelle suggests that its architectural scheme was deliberately adapted to the requirements of the square audience hall, which was of basic importance. Additional niches were thus added at the sides and opposite the throne exedra, and it is also possible that the ambulatory served a related purpose. How far these special possibilities for banqueting were actually used is a different and more difficult question. That the only pictorial mosaic in the Audience Hall depicts a fruit for whose consumption a knife was needed lends further weight to the theory that one of the functions of the Hall was as a feasting room; the existence of these *akkubita* thus suggests still one more facet to this complex building which apparently had to serve many functions.

To sum up, then, the coordinated multipurpose arrangement of the Throne Hall complex at Khirbat al-Mafjar is Roman, but the building itself is Byzantine, representing an elaboration of an architectural type used by earlier Arab chieftains in Syria. The floor mosaics are also of Roman and Byzantine derivation. Technically and artistically they are exceptionally fine and surpass in most instances the work done for the churches of the region. Although the range of figural motifs is very limited, they approach in quality even the work done in the

[1] Rudolf Naumann, "Vorbericht über die Ausgrabungen zwischen Mese und Antiochus-Palast 1964 in Istanbul," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, vol. 15, 1965, pp. 135-148; Rudolph Naumann—Hans Belting, *Die Euphemia-Kirche am Hippodrom zu Istanbul und ihre Fresken*. Berlin, 1966, pp. 15-23, fig. 1. I am much obliged to Mr. S. Ćurćić for his comments about the buildings mentioned in this and the following two footnotes.

[2] Richard Krautheimer, "Die Decanneacubita in Konstantinopel. Ein kleiner Beitrag zur Frage Rom und Byzanz," W. N. Schumacher ,(ed.), *Tortulae, Studien zu altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten (Festschrift Johann Kollwitz)*. Rom-Freiburg-Wien, 1966, pp. 197-198. See also Ph. Lauer, *Le Palais de Latran*. Paris, 1911, pp. 101-107, pl. XXXV. Here the triclinium functioned also as reception hall and council chamber.

[3] Felix Kreusch, "Kirche, Atrium und Portikus der Aachener Pfalz," *Karolingische Kunst*, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels und Hermann Schnitzler. Düsseldorf, 1965. vol. 3, fig. 1 opposite p. 464. Here the triclinlum-like structure had probably the main function as "aula" or throne hall (*loc. cit.*, p. 307).

[4] Krautheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-199.

Imperial Palace of Constantinople. The decoration of the walls and particularly the stuccoes is, however, Iranian, both in technique and in imagery. This observation is not contradicted by the fact that certain designs from the Iranian repertory originally came from the West. The symbolism used is clearly Oriental and specifically Iranian.

We can therefore say that the structure and what belonged to the floor were Western, more specifically Byzantine, whereas the wall decorations and most of the iconography were Iranian. Three further conclusions suggest themselves. First, the basic Byzantine and Sasanian elements co-exist here as "equal but separate" entities; there seems thus to be no true intermingling of the two strains, only a skillful co-ordination. One reason for this may possibly have been that the local Palestinian or Syrian masons were not able to construct a major vaulted hall on the order of the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon, the original setting of "the suspended crown." Secondly, while the architecture itself is due to functional considerations—of which the wish to impress and present a grandiose and luxurious setting for major ceremonial occasions was just one aspect—the decorations at the Porch, Throne Apse and elsewhere were meant as proclamations of the owner's special pretentions and general ideas. As such they reflected his self image which centered around imperial ambitions, but they also presented his world view which ranged from beliefs in evil spirits and the means of their magical entrapment, to a preference for Persian costume, and included even a value judgement of war and peace. Finally, it can be said that while the whole setting and imagery is pre-Islamic, the way in which the various features were impressively combined is both novel and a specific Umayyad achievement. It is also noteworthy that in this complex, concerted effort, the new religious ideas reveal themselves, if at all, in only one place and then in the spatially more limited and private Diwan.

The strong emphasis on the Iranian element may come as a surprise, considering that the building was erected in territory with a long-standing Byzantine tradition, in which the Umayyads had established a successor state to the East Roman Empire. We should, however, realize that it was just during the reign of Hisham that the Arab government grasped that the various efforts to conquer the heartland of the Byzantine Empire in Anatolia and Europe, and particularly the capital at Constantinople, had failed; it therefore turned toward Iraq and the East.[1] This shift went beyond a mere political reorientation and seems to have affected the whole mental outlook of the caliphs. Hisham, for example, commissioned an Arabic translation of a Persian illustrated history of all the Sasanian kings,[2] and we know that Walid ibn Yazid used Persian idiomatic expressions.[3] This change in the caliphs' official and personal

[1] H. A. R. Gibb, "Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 12, 1958, pp. 232-233.

[2] Mas'udi, *Kitab al-Tanbih* (*Bibl. Geogr. Arab.* ed. M. J. de Goeje, vol. 8). Leyden, 1894, p. 106; Grabar, "The Painting of the Six Kings...," p. 187.

[3] Mas'udi, *Les Prairies d'or*, ed. et tr. C. Barbier de Meynard. Paris, 1871, vol. 6, p. 12 where he uses the Persian expression: *haft hafteh*-"seven weeks."

orientations naturally led to identifications with the "Kisra,"[1] an identification plainly reflected in the Throne Hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar. Here the integration of Byzantine with Iranian elements finds its finest expression and much of the subsequent art in Muslim lands is due to the catalytic effect of this combination.

There is, however, one further important point to be made. The data here presented established the nature and various aspects of the Throne Hall, but they also stressed the dichotomy of the structure, that is, its origins in both Classical (Roman and Byzantine) and Sasanian sources and in addition, its connection with a third historical root, the Ghassanid subculture of Syria. However the formalistic motif-by-motif, mosaic-like approach and the categories used are those of a 20th-century historian. Whether they truly reflect the all encompassing architectural concepts of the lord of Khirbat al-Mafjar is uncertain. As no detailed records are available of the Umayyad concept of architecture and in particular of this building, it may well seem impossible to be more specific about this point. Yet help can be derived from the medieval European viewpoint which to all intents and purposes appears to have had a similar notion as to the function and main aspects of architectural monuments. Richard Krautheimer[2] in his pioneering work dealt with the iconography of medieval European architecture, especially with architectural copies of revered, pivotal buildings such as the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Such a comparison is all the more warranted as the building of Khirbat al-Mafjar was obviously inspired by, possibly even endeavored to imitate a celebrated model, the Sasanian palace of Ctesiphon.

Krautheimer's research has shown that the medieval copies (of which the earliest example quoted by him dates from the early ninth century) followed certain principles. There was never an exact reproduction *in toto* of the building, only a "selective transfer" of architectural elements from the prototype to the copy, particularly of the most significant features and symbolic functions. This means that the original coherence of the structure and its proportions were given up and the essential components reshuffled and at times even further endowed with collateral features. This partial re-use usually consisted of a few basic visual features but the selection could also have been restricted to some immaterial aspects such as the mere name and the symbolic function of the original monument. This procedure resulted in "copies" which to the uninitiated have often little or no resemblance with the prototype, just as the various "copies" hardly resembled each other. Yet in using just minimal reminders the copy was apparently as effective in providing the same general content as the prototype and in arousing the same associations.

[1] Oleg Grabar, "An Introduction to the Art of Sasanian Silver," *Sasanian Silver. Late Antique and Early Medieval Arts of Luxury From Iran*. Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Museum of Art. 1967, pp. 19-21.

[2] Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 5, 1942, pp. 1-20; republished in *idem*, *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art*. New York, 1969, pp. 115-130.

What the Palestinian architect apparently meant to do was to create the local equivalent of the throne *eyvan* of Ctesiphon inasmuch as in the new Throne Hall he used as many of the Sasanian trappings as possible and in particular the all important royal headgear hung above the throne emplacement. He also chose the regional equivalent of the *eyvan* by building a wide, clearly marked central nave. These aspects, then, it may be said, were enough to create the image of Ctesiphon. Hence the differences of the visual forms, the contrast between the Byzantine structure and the symbolic Sasanian decorations, are conceptually of no real significance.

The Sasanian Throne Hall was thus recreated and further elaborated with additional features in typical *nouveau riche* fashion. Should this point of view be admissible—and there seems little reason to question it although it might be difficult to prove it—Khirbat al-Mafjar emerges as a case of true integration of the various elements used so as to serve in the most specific fashion the exigencies of the Umayyad builder.

The Throne Hall provides two additional insights of a different nature. First, the statues of the slave girls high up in the Porch are part of the courtly setting along with athletes and warriors but resemble remarkably the female figures of Dionysiac origin on the Sasanian silver vessels which were discussed in the first chapter (pp. 5-6). In both instances these images are frontal and half-nude with a cloth covering the lower part of the body; both types reveal a strongly stressed bosom; the faces show full cheeks, large eyes and long straight noses; and the arms hold flowers or fruits (compare Fig. 91 with Figs. 20-22). Thus, a motif which in Sasanian Iran had been of Classical derivation has returned as an Iranian feature to what had been Classical territory. The development has come full circle and the sacred imagery has been completely secularized. It is not, however, just this iconographic aspect which was re-imported from Persia. The introduction of singing maidens into Arab society as well as that of the boon companions (*nudama*) and of wine drinking was also of Persian origin.[1]

The second point to be made is of a more general character. As the decoration in the Throne Hall appears to a large extent to be deliberate and meaningful, other allegedly meaningless decorations, particularly in public structures, may also deserve to be studied as to whether they, too, have been purposeful and significant. This opens up a whole new field of investigation, the importance of which could carry far beyond the early Islamic period.

[1] S. D. Goitein, "Formal Friendship in the Medieval Near East," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 115, December 1971, p. 485.

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Fig. 23. Ivory Medicine Box with Dionysos Between Maenad and Satyr. Egypt, Fourth to Fifth Century A.D. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Collection.

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Fig. 25. Silver Statuette of Dionysos. Roman, Second to Third Century A.D. Private Collection.

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Fig. 29. Silver Handle of a Vessel. Roman, First to Second Century A.D. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase Rogers Fund, 1910.

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PLATE IV

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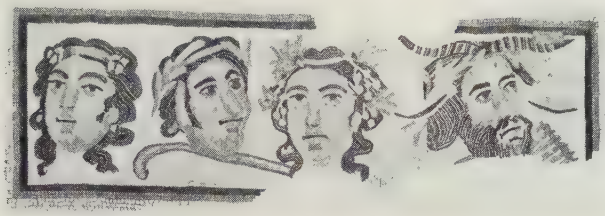

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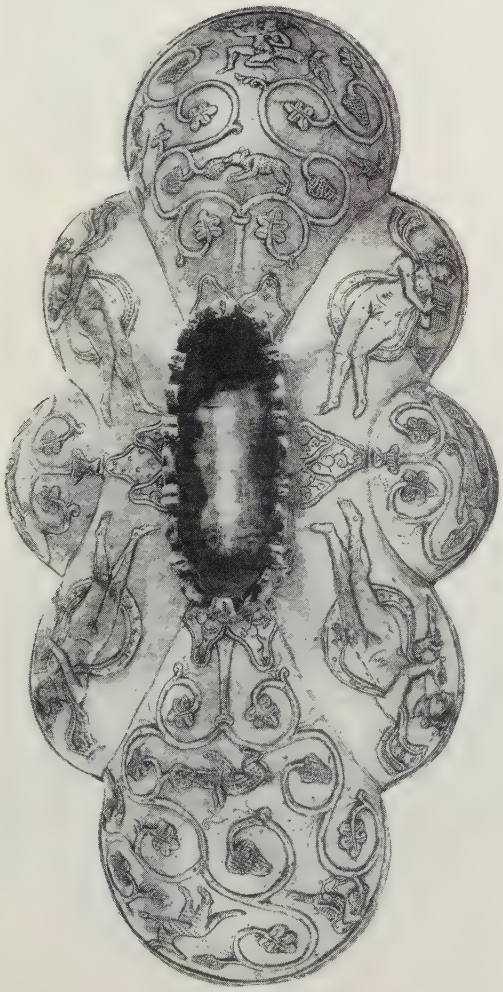

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PLATE VI

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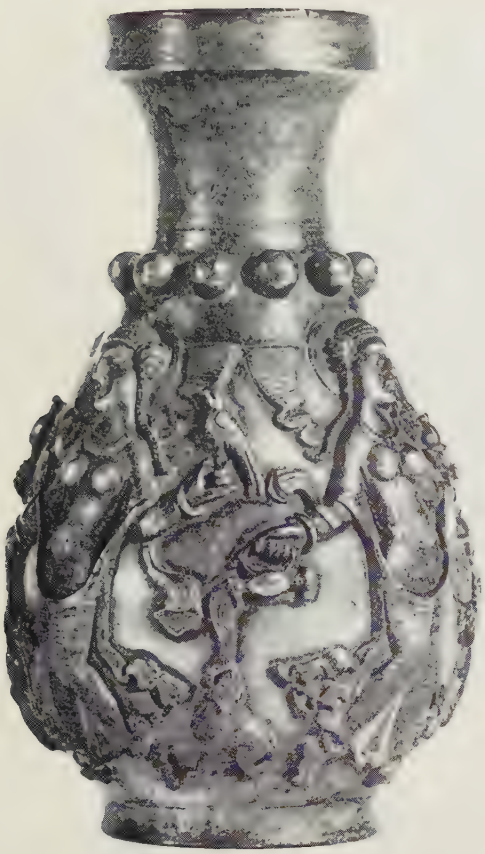

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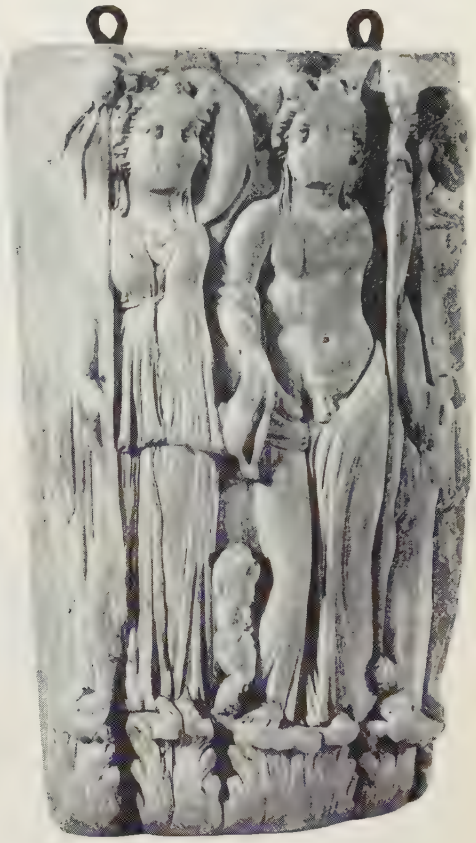

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Plate VIII

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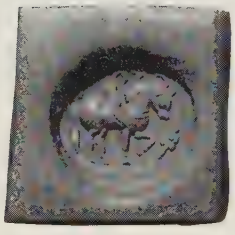

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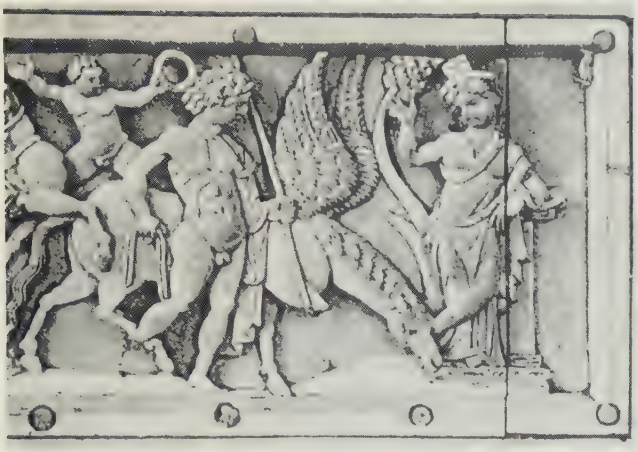

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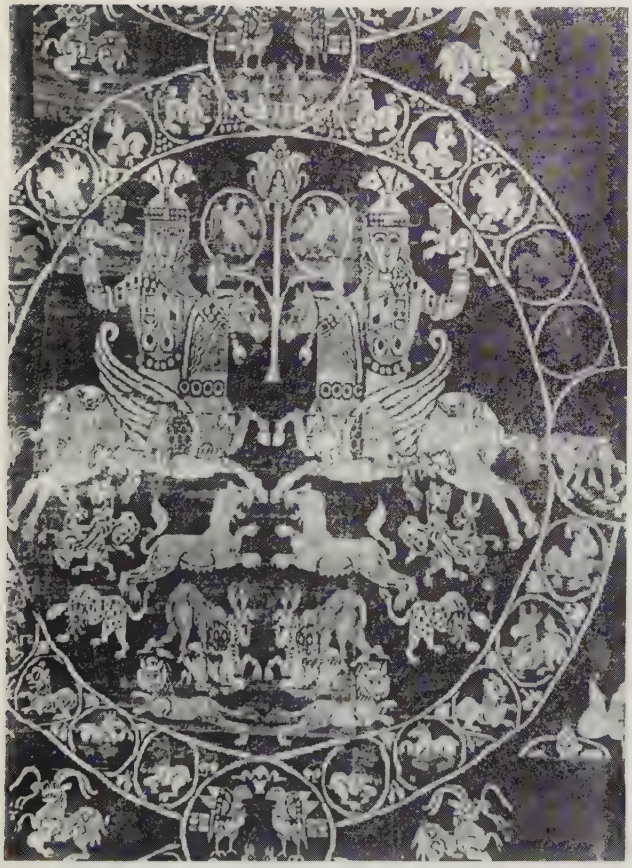

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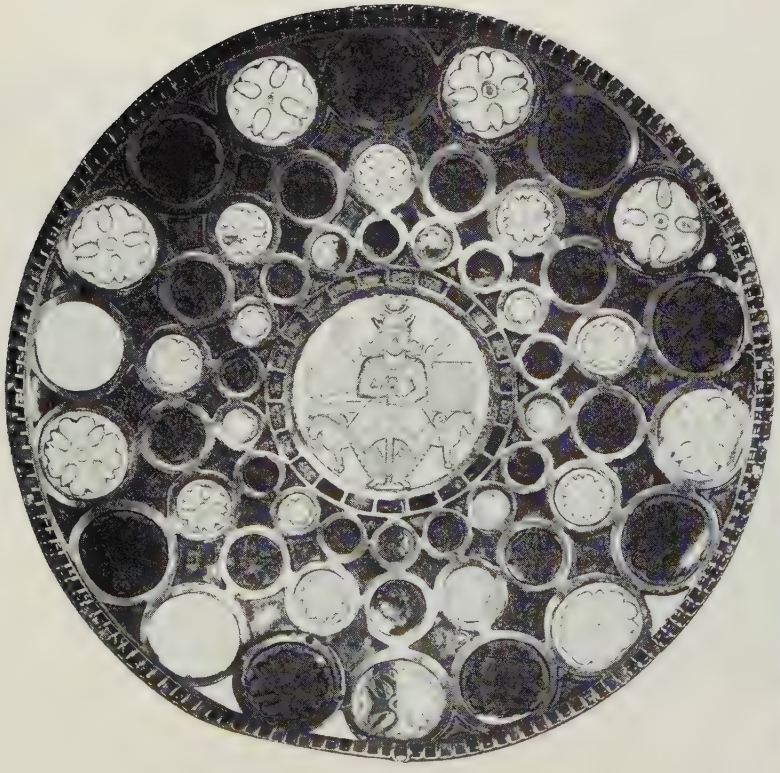

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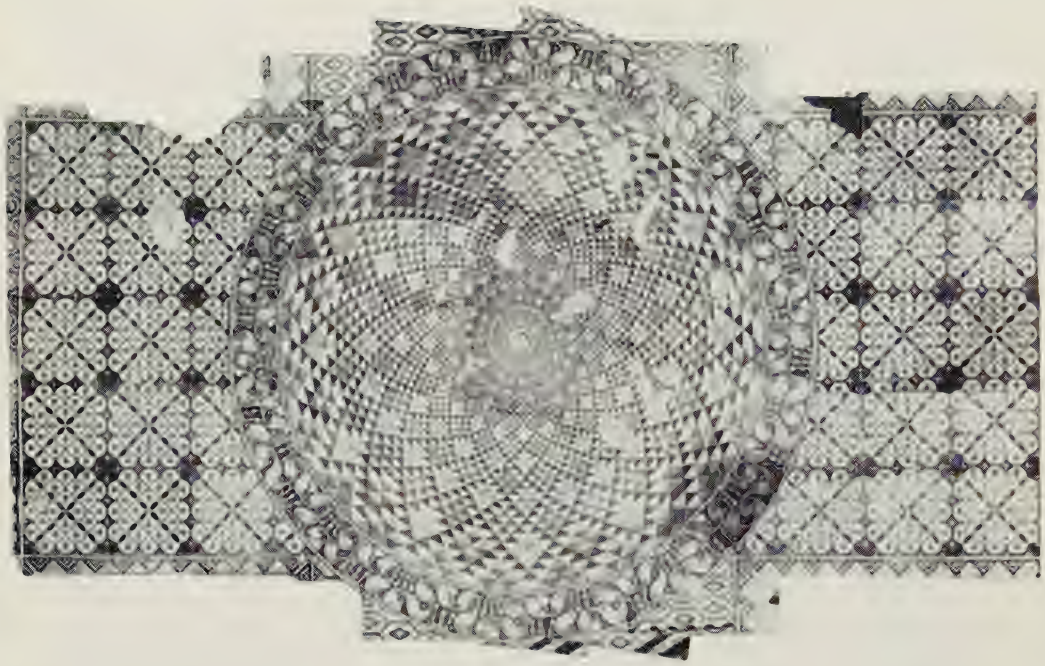

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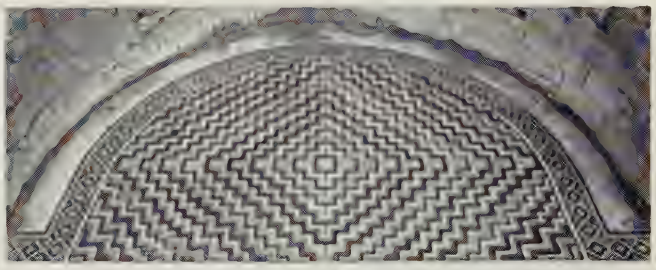

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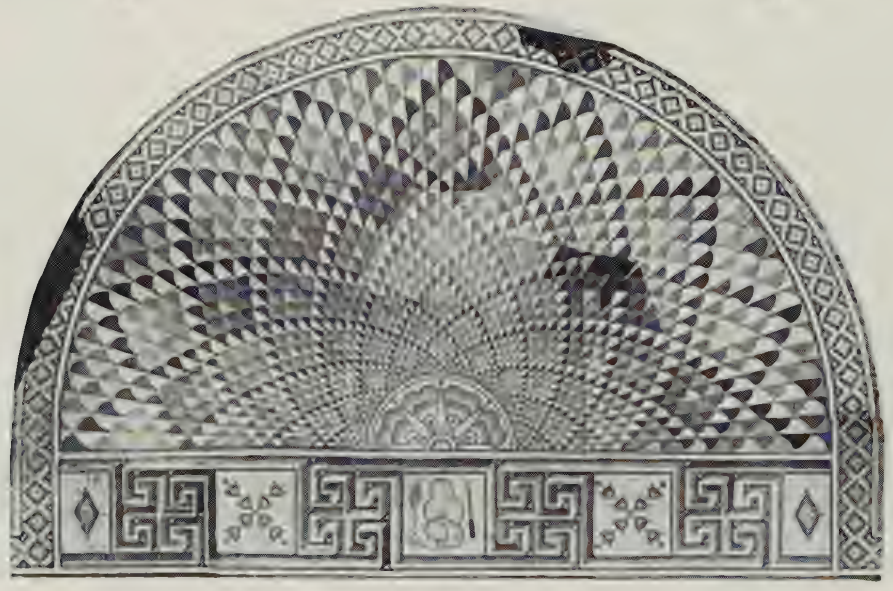

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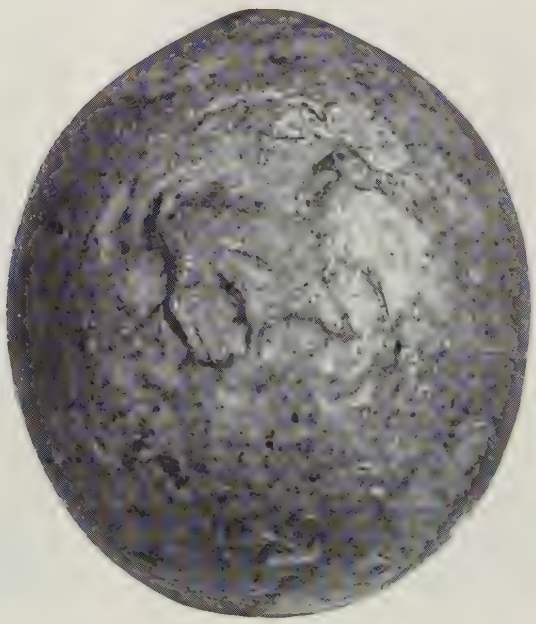

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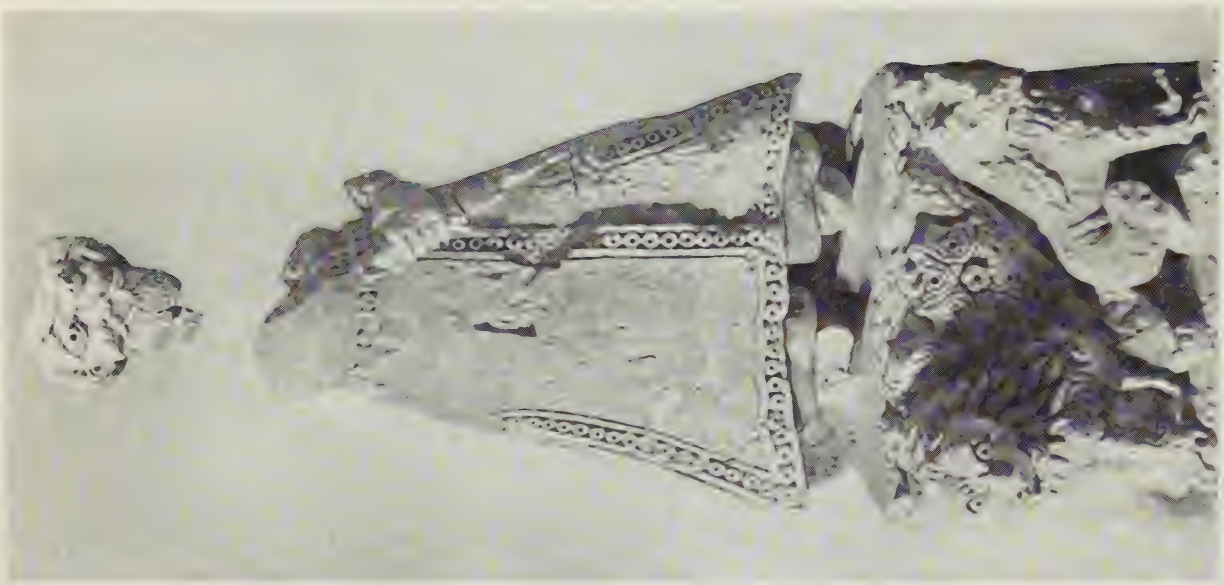

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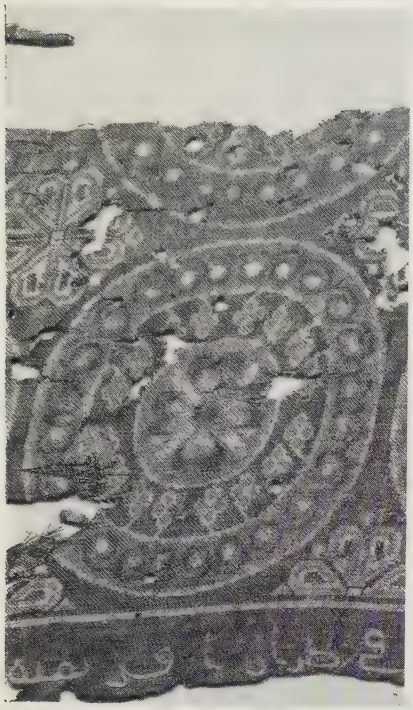

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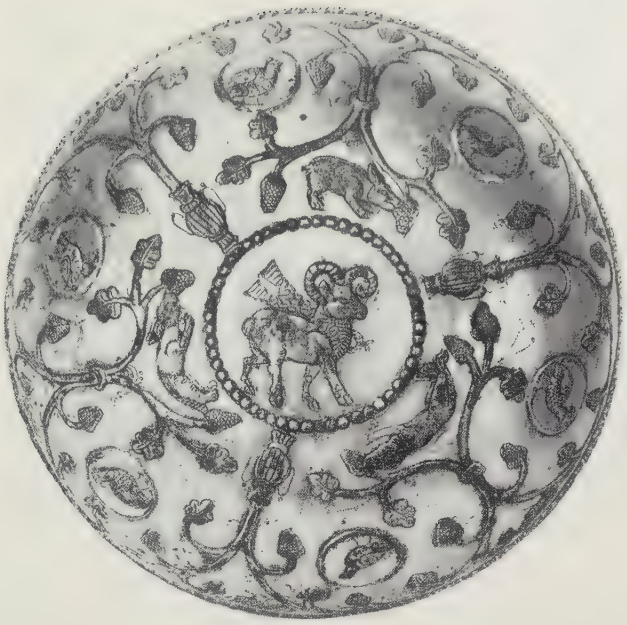

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and reconstructions of such royal settings were until now based on literary sources and Sasanian silverwork. The plan of the Throne Hall goes back to earlier structures of a similar nature (2nd and 6th century A.D.) which were built for Arab chieftains living under Byzantine rule. In turn, it became the prototype of a mosque plan used from the 9th to the 16th century and most likely, also of the Middle Byzantine "quincunx" or "cross-in-square" church plan which became standard from the early 9th century on. The combination of the Classical and Sasanian strains in a unified building reflects a true and particularly effective integration of the different elements.

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